



PANORAMA PLUS

MOVEMENT 2 • PATRIARCHS

name

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PREFACE

Panorama of the Bible is a twelve-week study of the whole of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. The approach identifies twelve movements that comprise a comprehensive, integrated overview of the Bible while emphasizing the Panorama Timeline. The Timeline provides a linear time frame for key people, events, places, and dates of each of the twelve movements.

This series, “Panorama Plus,” takes each of the twelve movements and drills deeper over a six-week study. At completion, the Bible student will have taken the basic Panorama (12 sessions), followed up with Panorama Plus (six sessions each for twelve Panorama movements—72 sessions). The end result would be a fuller, more comprehensive, strategic grasp of the flow of the Scriptures.

This particular study is Panorama Plus 2: Patriarchs. Covering the Scriptural text of Genesis 12-50, the student of the Scriptures is introduced to the ancient patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Story of Joseph leading the Egyptian sojourn and the Book of Job are covered as well.

A special emphasis on the importance and enduring significance of the Abrahamic Covenant is introduced. The Kingdom program of God is extended through Abraham and his descendants.

Welcome to our continuing journey! May we all understand that we will never “master” the Bible, but through our continued study, it may begin to “master” us. May it be so to God’s glory.

Robert V. Cupp
The Training Center

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◆ NOTE TO THE STUDENT

This material is structured in outline form, yet it is complete enough that the student can gain maximum benefit from the lectures if the material is read beforehand. There is much to cover; the best learning experience combines the student's reading(s) and the lecture overview.

Panorama of the Bible

12 Key Movements

Movement	Biblical Books
1. Prologue	Genesis 1-11
2. Patriarchs	Genesis 12-50; Job
3. Redemption and Wanderings	Exodus - Leviticus - Numbers - Deuteronomy
4. Conquest	Joshua
5. Apostasy	Judges; Ruth
6. Kingship: United Monarchy	1-2 Samuel; 1 Kings 1-11 (Pss, Prov, Eccl, Song of Solomon)
7. Kingship: Divided Monarchy	1 Kings 12-22; 2 Kings (Prophets - selected)
8. Exile	Daniel; Ezekiel (Jeremiah)
9. Return from Exile and 400 Silent Years	Ezra; Nehemiah; Esther (Haggai - Zechariah - Malachi)
10. Life of Christ	Matthew - Mark - Luke - John
11. Church Age	Acts and Epistles (Rev 1-3)
12. Final Consummation	Revelation (Daniel)

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SESSION 1

CALL OF ABRAHAM

SESSION 1

CALL OF ABRAHAM

I. **PRAYER / PURPOSE**

II. **PANORAMA**

A. **Twelve Movements**

1. Prologue
2. **Patriarchs**
3. Redemption/ Wandering
4. Conquest
5. Apostasy
6. Kingship: United
7. Kingship: Divided
8. Exile
9. Return from Exile
10. Life of Christ
11. Church Age
12. Final Consumation

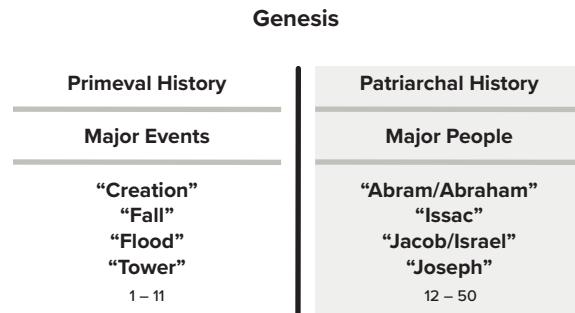
B. **Timeline**

1. Prologue #1

2. Patriarchs #2

III. MOVEMENT #1: “PROLOGUE” (Background)

A. Charted: Major Events/Major People



B. Outline: “Toledot” Sections

Creation (1:1-2:3)

- 1. Toledot of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4-4:26)**
- 2. Toledot of Adam (5:1-6:8)**
- 3. Toledot of Noah (6:9-9:29)**
- 4. Toledot of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10:1-11:9)**
- 5. Toledot of Shem (11:10-26)**
- 6. Toledot of Terah (11:27-25:11)**
- 7. Toledot of Ishmael (25:12-18)**
- 8. Toledot of Isaac (25:19-35:29)**
- 9. Toledot of Esau, the father of Edom (twice) (36:1-8; 36:9-37:1)**
- 10. Toledot of Jacob (37:2-50:26)**

◆ **INSIGHT**

This word, “toledot” is found 10 times in Genesis. It marks off a section of the book. Usually translated “generations of” or “descendants of,” its usage in Genesis leads to a good translation as “what became of” with the subsequent Biblical material providing the answer.

IV. MOVEMENT #2: “Patriarchs”

A. Genesis 12-50 (Horizontal Chart)

Abraham	Issac	Jacob	Joseph
12	25	26	36

B. Genesis 11:27-50:26 (“Toledot” Structure)

1. See Outline of Genesis by 10 Toledot sections (see above).

2. Remaining “Toledot” sections (Movement #2):

- a. “Account of Terah” (11:27-25:11)

The previous “toledot” of Shem (11:10-26) has traced the line of blessing (“seed of the woman” – 3:15) to Terah, the father of Abraham.

This section introduces the reader to Abram (Abraham), the one with whom God will make an everlasting covenant.

- b. “Account of Ishmael” (25:12-18)
Ishmael, the son of Abraham by Sarah’s handmaiden, is not slighted, though he and his descendants are not of the elect line.
- c. “Account of Isaac” (25:19-35:29)
The promises of Abraham are passed to his son, Isaac. This section introduces Isaac’s two sons, Esau and Jacob. Tension escalates between the brothers, though Jacob will continue the line of blessing and covenant promise.
- d. “Account of Esau”
Two separate accounts (36:1-8 and 36:9-37:1) comprise the genealogy of Esau, son of Isaac. Though Esau is not of the chosen line (Jacob is), his record as the father of the Edomites is given.
- e. “Account of Jacob” (37:2-50:26)
The final toledot concludes with the descendants (twelve sons) of Jacob. Though Joseph will take prominence, it is the story of divine protection of the sons of Jacob that drives the section.

V. LIFE OF ABRAHAM

A. Vertical Chart (Genesis 12-50)

Life of Abraham

The Call 12-14	The Covenant 15-21	The Confirmation 22-25
From Ur to Haran to Shechem to Bethel (12)	Covenant Given & Ratified (Abram to Abraham) (15)	Testing of Abraham (22)
To Egypt (Sister Story #1) (12)	Hagar and Ishmael (16)	“The LORD Will Provide” (22)
To Negev (Abram & Lot separate) (13)	Covenant Confirmation & Circumcision (17)	Death of Sarah (23)
Abram rescues Lot (14)	Sodom and Gomorrah (18-19)	Cave of Machpelah (23)
Abram and Melchizedek (14)	Abraham and Abimelech (Sister Story #2) (20)	Isaac and Rebekah (24)
	Birth of Isaac; Departure of Hagar & Ishmael (21)	Death of Abraham (25)
	Treaty at Beersheba (21)	

B. Abrahamic Cycle (Concentric Pattern)

The following “concentric pattern” (or chiastic structure yet without a central, singular pivot) is adapted from Waltke (*Genesis*, 20). Note the meticulous structural and thematic arrangement.

A Genealogy of Terah (11:21-32)

B Genealogy of a Son; Spiritual Odyssey Begins (12:1-9)

C Lies about Sarah; Protection in a Foreign Palace (12:10-20)

D Lot Settles in Sodom (13:1-18)

E Abraham: Interceding for Sodom and Delivering Lot (14:1-24)

F Covenant with Abraham: Annunciation of Ishmael (15:1 - 16:16)

F' Covenant with Abraham: Annunciation of Isaac (17:1 – 18:15)

E' Abraham: Interceding for Sodom and Praying for Lot (18:16-33)

D' Lot Flees Sodom (to Settle in Moab – 19:1-38)

C' Lies about Sarah; Protection in a Foreign Palace (20:1-18)

B' Birth of a Son; Spiritual Odyssey Peaks (21:1 – 22:19)

A' Genealogy of Nahor (22:20-24)

As in most chiastic-type structures, the most important “hinges” occur at the mid-point. With such a literary structure in view, this points to the Abrahamic Covenant (F and F'). The importance of this covenantal arrangement cannot be overstated. This will be addressed in the next section.

Note also that this structure does not include the death of Sarah and burial site – Gen. 28). Nor does the pattern include the search for a wife for Isaac (Gen. 24) or the death of Abraham (25:1-11).

IV. LIFE OF ABRAHAM Genesis 12-25

A. The Call (12-14)

1. Generally: a call to a new destiny

GENESIS 12:1-3

“The LORD had said to Abram, ‘Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. ² I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’”

- a. Previously (Genesis 11) mankind has rebelled and suffered the judgment of dispersal. If man would not “fill the earth and subdue it” (1:28), if he would not “be fruitful and increase in number...multiply on the earth and increase upon it” (9:7), then God in judgment would “scatter them over the face of the earth” (11:9).
- b. The call of Abram pivots the Genesis story from global events to one particular man who will bring the gift of salvation blessing to the whole world.
- c. Grammatical insights (12:1-3):
 - (1) Two Hebrew imperatives:
 - (a) “Leave your country”... Leave!
 - (b) “You will be a blessing”... Be a blessing!
 - (2) Three promises attached to each imperative:
 - (a) Leave
 - “I will make you into a great nation” (12:2)
 - “I will bless you” (12:2)
 - “I will make your name great” (12:2)
 - (b) Be (a blessing)
 - “I will bless those who bless you” (12:3)
 - “I will curse” (whoever curses you) (12:3)
 - “All peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (i.e. Abram) (12:3)
 - (c) The call begins with a command to leave the safety and security of his homeland. This requires faith in order to be obedient to the call.

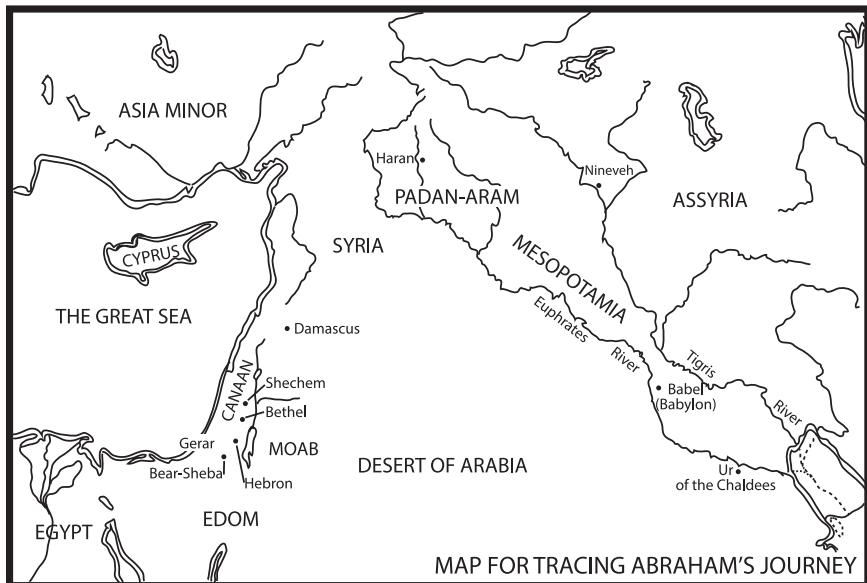
Genesis 12:4 records, “So Abram left....”

HEBREWS 11:8-9a

“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹ By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country...”

2. Geographically: a call to a new land

The call for Abram had required that he leave Ur (Acts 7:2-3); he did so and traveled to Haran (11:31). From Haran, Abram took his wife, Sarai, and his nephew, Lot, to enter the land that God had promised He would show Abram (12:1). The map (below) shows the key locations in this regard.



*Taken from I. Jensen, *Genesis: A Self-Study Guide*, 48-49.

3. Wavering: a sojourn into Egypt

GENESIS 12:10-13

"Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe. ¹¹ As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, 'I know what a beautiful woman you are. ¹² When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live. ¹³ Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you.'"

From an act of faith-obedience Abram then displays fear of the famine by journeying to Egypt. This is the first of three "sister-stories" in Genesis. The use of deception to gain one's desires will be a recurring theme in Genesis. Even so, God blesses "in spite of" this lapse.

4. Abram and Lot (Gen. 13)

GENESIS 13:1-4

"So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. ² Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold.

³ From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier ⁴ and where he had first built an altar. There Abram called on the name of the LORD."

- a. Abram's wealth was due to the sojourn in Egypt (12:10-20). Though it amassed for him great wealth, it almost cost him his wife.
- b. Bethel was a holy site where earlier Abram had built an altar (for worship) and "called on the name of the LORD" (12:8). Is this return to Bethel significant? Is this an evidence of repentance (over the "Egypt affair")?

GENESIS 13:5-7a

"Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. ⁶ But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. ⁷ **And quarreling arose** between Abram's herders and Lot's."

- c. The vast possession of flocks and herds (indicative of God's blessings) bring Lot and Abram into conflict.
- d. Graciously, Abram gives Lot the choice of the land in which to settle. Presumably, Abram was older than Lot, thus the more remarkable the gesture.
- e. In Abram's mind, Lot was the best choice to be his heir since Abram and Sarai were old and barren. If so, then in light of God's promise of the land to Abram, this would be a partitioning of the Promised Land.

GENESIS 13:14-17

"The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, 'Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. ¹⁵ All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. ¹⁶ I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. ¹⁷ Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.'"

5. Rescue of Lot (Gen. 14)

- a. While Abram settled in Hebron and worshipped the Lord at that place (13:18), Lot settled in the lush Jordan Valley near Sodom, the place of wicked men (13:10-13).
- b. In time a coalition of kings from Mesopotamia invaded Canaan and Lot was taken captive (14:8-12). Word reached Abram of the plight of his nephew.

GENESIS 14:14-16

"When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan. ¹⁵ During the night Abram divided his men to attack them and he routed them, pursuing them as

far as Hobah, north of Damascus.¹⁶ He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people.”

- c. Retaliation was a common practice of the day. Perhaps, more so, was his devotion to his kinsman.
- d. How could 318 trained men defeat an alliance of kings?
 - (1) Abram did also have an alliance with Mamre, Eschol and Aner (with an unnumbered collection of men) (14:13).
 - (2) Abram and men were facing a victorious army, yet one that had labored through the battles and fatigue of warfare (14:8-9).
 - (3) Abram and men successfully attacked at night (cf. the story of Gideon and the Midianites, Judges 6-8; 300 fierce fighters vs. thousands).
 - (4) Kidner (*Genesis*, 120) suggests that the attack could have been “possibly against only an escort-group lagging behind (cf. 16) the main force.” Regardless, the efforts were successful and Lot, his possessions and his people were rescued.

6. Meeting with two kings (Gen. 14)

- a. King of Salem

GENESIS 14:18-20

“Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High,¹⁹ and he blessed Abram, saying, ‘Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.²⁰ And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.’ Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.”

- (1) The king-priest was named Melchizedek (“king of righteousness”).
- (2) Likely, Abram had friendly relations with the priest-king before the war. The fact that Abram shared a tithe (“tenth”) of that gained in battle may indicate Abram’s sense of obligation to the priest of God Most High (Hb. “El Elyon;” combined in v. 22 with YHWH). It further would acknowledge Abram’s recognition of the gracious hand of God Most High upon Abram’s rescue efforts.
- (3) The New Testament will see Melchizedek as a priest of unknown origin or lineage. His legitimate priesthood predated the Levites and becomes a model for the unique priesthood of Christ (cf. Ps. 110:4 and Hebrews 7).

- (4) Some attempt to identify Melchizedek as a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ, though there is little compelling evidence to do so.

- b. King of Sodom

GENESIS 14:21-24

“The king of Sodom said to Abram, ‘Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself.’²² But Abram said to the king of Sodom, ‘With raised hand I have sworn an oath to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth,²³ that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the strap of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, ‘I made Abram rich.’²⁴ I will accept nothing but what my men have eaten and the share that belongs to the men who went with me—to Aner, Eshkol and Mamre. Let them have their share.’”

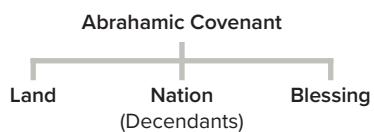
- (1) This rejection highlighted Abram’s full and complete dependence upon God alone.
- (2) This also allowed Abram to maintain his moral claim to his own possessions, not beholding to any other. “The gifts of the ungodly are often attached to deadly strings” (J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison*, 182).

B. The Covenant (15-21)

- 1. Refer to the chart, “Life of Abraham” (p. 8).
Chapters 15ff begin a new section in the continuing story of Abram.
- 2. This session will highlight the Abrahamic Covenant in overview. Session 2 will complete the story.
 - a. Recall the “Call of Abram.”

GENESIS 12:1-3

“The LORD had said to Abram, ‘Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.² I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’”



b. Read the preview to the “Covenant with Abram”

GENESIS 15:1

“After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.’”

- (1) “Do not be afraid...” Of what? Perhaps Abram was fearful of further war (Gen. 14).
- (2) Perhaps Abram was fearful of dying without promised offspring (12:7).

GENESIS 15:2-3

“But Abram said, ‘Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?’ ³ And Abram said, ‘You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.’”

- (1) With the separation (schism?) of Abram and Lot, it could be that Abram’s concern was that only his trusted servant would inherit his wealth (per the custom of that day).
- (2) Abram’s faith seems to be wavering. Where is the offspring promised? Yet God replied that “a son coming from your own body will be your heir” (15:4). Moreover, your descendants will be as great as the stars at night.

3. Note the spiritual condition of Abram

Before the formal giving and ratification of the covenant, Abram’s spiritual condition is highlighted. This verse is considered to be one of the most important verses in all of the Scriptures.

GENESIS 15:6

“Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”

GENESIS 15:6 (NEB)

“Abram put his faith in the LORD, and the LORD counted that faith as righteousness.”

- a. To believe is to trust or to put faith in.
- b. The object of faith is the Promise-Fulfilling God.
- c. The result is to be declared (judicially not experientially) righteous before God.
- d. This principle of a right standing before God is later appropriated by NT writers:

ROMANS 4:1-3

“What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? ² If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. ³ What does Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’”

GALATIANS 3:6-9

“So also Abraham ‘believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ ⁷ Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. ⁸ Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you.’ ⁹ So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.”

THEOLOGICAL TERMS

- Faith: “belief in and commitment to something or someone” (M. Erickson)
- Justification: “to announce a favorable verdict, to declare righteous” (C. Ryrie)
- Righteousness: “the state of being just or morally pure” (M. Erickson)

INSIGHT

“Faith is the force behind the deed. The deed is the finality of the faith. The verb is translated ‘was made complete’ (eteleiōthē) and means ‘to carry to the end.’ Faith finds fulfillment in action. So it was with Abraham... Paul said that Abraham was justified by faith, and James said that Abraham was justified by faith evidenced by what he did.” (R. Blue, “James” in BKC, 827)

JAMES 2:20-24

“You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹ Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³ And the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,’ and he was called God’s friend. ²⁴ You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.”

- e. Constable (135) notes, “Moses probably recorded Abram’s faith here because it was foundational for making the Abrahamic Covenant—God made this covenant with a man who believed in Him.”
4. Faith and obedience is an early, foundational teaching of the Scriptures. “The Hebrew construction translated “believed” (in 15:6) means to place trust in someone with confidence (eg. Ex. 19:9; 1 Sam. 27:12)” (Mathews, *Genesis* 11-50,166).



SESSION 2

ABRAHAM

SESSION 2

ABRAHAM

I. PRAYER

II. PANORAMA TIMELINE (Movements #1 and #2)

"Prologue"



"Patriarchs"



III. PATRIARCHS

A. Genesis 12-50 (Horizontal Chart)

Abraham	Issac	Jacob	Joseph
12	25	26	36

B. Toledots (Terah, Ishmael, Isaac, Esau-2 times, Jacob)

*see session 1, p. 7.

IV. ABRAHAM: MAN OF "FAITH"

A. Horizontal Chart (Genesis 12-25)

Life of Abraham

The Call 12-14

Covenant Faith Begun

The Covenant 15-21

Covenant Faith Tested

The Confirmation 22-25

Covenant Faith Perfected

B. The Call (Genesis 12-14)

*Covered in Session 1

C. The Covenant (Genesis 15-21): Chapter Outline

1. Covenant Given and Ratified (15)
2. Hagar and Ishmael (16)
3. Covenant Confirmation and Circumcision (17)
(Abram → Abraham)
4. Sodom and Gomorrah (18-19)
5. Abraham and Abimelech (20)
(Sister Story #2)
6. Birth of Isaac (21)
(Departure of Hagar and Ishmael)
7. Treaty at Beersheba (21)

V. LIFE OF ABRAHAM: THE COVENANT (Genesis 15-21)

◆ For a full view of the “Life of Abraham” with chapter outlines as above, see “Life of Abraham: Vertical Chart” in Session 1, p. 8

A. Covenant Given and Ratified (Genesis 15)

1. Structural overview (adapted from Waltke, Genesis, 239)

A Promise to Abraham : “I am” (1)

B Question of Abraham : to “Sovereign LORD” (2-3)

C Assurance to Abraham : stars and offspring (4-6)

A' Promise to Abraham : “I am” (7)

B' Question of Abraham: to “Sovereign LORD” (8)

C' Assurance to Abraham: torch and sacrifices (9-21)

2. Thematic overview (based upon the structure above)



3. Promise #1

GENESIS 15:1-5

“After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.’²

But Abram said, ‘Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?’³ And Abram said, ‘You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.’⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to him: ‘This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.’⁵ He took him outside and said, ‘Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’

(Note: these verses were covered at end of Session 1)

4. Faith Response

GENESIS 15:6

“Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”

Note: “Technically, Abram trusted in a Person and hoped in a promise” (Constable, 136).

5. Promise #2

GENESIS 15:7-8

“He also said to him, ‘I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.’⁶ But Abram said, “Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?”

a. Verse 5 had indicated that “offspring” (or seed or descendants) was a part of the Abrahamic Covenant. Here (v. 7), “land” is a promised part of the Covenant.

b. Genesis 12:1-3 recorded the initial call and earliest promise of the Abrahamic Covenant.

(1) Leave and go to the “land” I will show you (v. 1).

(2) I will make you a great “nation” (descendants) (v. 2).

(3) You will be a “blessing” (v. 2) and all peoples will be “blessed” through you (v. 3).

c. Charted



d. Confirmation / Ratification

GENESIS 15:9-11

“So the LORD said to him, “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.”¹⁰ Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half.¹¹ Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.”

- (1) The actions of cutting and dividing the animals speaks of a blood covenant (contract or agreement).
- (2) The birds were not cut in two. Perhaps their small size was a factor (cf. Lev. 1:14-17).
- (3) The animals are all three years old indicative of being mature, in the prime of life (cf. 1 Sam. 1:24).
- (4) Ancient Near Eastern peoples and customs practiced several kinds of covenants (as attested in the Scriptures).

◆ TYPES OF "COVENANTS"

1. **Blood Covenant:** contract sealed by blood; pledges the lives of the covenant makers to ensure fidelity to stipulations. (cf. Jer. 34:8-11, 17-20)
2. **Hand Covenant:** contract sealed by striking of the pelvis or by shaking/grasping hands. (cf. Ezra 10:19; Ezek. 17:18)
3. **Shoe Covenant:** contract sealed by exchanging of sandals. (cf. Ruth 4:7-10)
4. **Salt Covenant:** contract sealed by pinch of salt taken from one person's salt pouch and placed in the other's. (cf. Lev. 2:13; Num. 18:19)

N.B. Of all these different covenants, the most solemn (perhaps most binding) was the "blood covenant."

DEUTERONOMY 18:9-13

“When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there.¹⁰ Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft,¹¹ or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead.¹² Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD; because of these same detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you.¹³ You must be blameless before the LORD your God.”

- (3) In Abram's vision a "smoking firepot" with a "blazing torch" appeared and passed between the severed pieces of the animals arrayed for the blood covenant. This smoky cloud and bright fire foreshadows the Shekinah presence of God during the "Sinai" event (Ex. 19:18; Deut. 4:10-12).
- (4) In blood covenants between equals, both parties would pass between the sacrificial animals. In this case only, God (smoke and fire) passed through. This blood covenant is a unilateral and unconditional covenant dependent upon God alone for its confirmation and ratification.
- (5) Note that the boundaries of the "promised land" are delineated (15:18-21).

B. Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 16)

1. The Hagar Story (16:1-6)

Beginning here in Genesis 16 to and until Genesis 21:2 (the birth of Isaac), the focus strays away from the "land" aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant and centers upon the delay in the "descendants" (or seed) aspect of the covenant.

GENESIS 16: 1-2

"Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar;² so she said to Abram, 'The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.' Abram agreed to what Sarai said."

- (1) Abram and Sarai are still barren 10 years after settling in Canaan (16:3). Sarai's suggestion was a common custom of that day (Nuzi Tablets and Code of Hammurabi). If a wife was barren, a child through a maid servant would produce an heir for inheritance rights.
- (2) Sarai's actions may be culturally permissible, but evidence of a lack of faith (at this point in the narrative). Abram, though a man of faith, has lapsed again (first lapse, note the Egyptian sojourn of Genesis 12:10ff). He should have trusted God's provision in God's timing. The actions of the couple take the initiative out of God's hands and places it within their own. At this point the culture of the day is guiding their actions, not faith in God.

GENESIS 16:4-6

"He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. ⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me." ⁶ 'Your slave is in your hands,' Abram said. 'Do with her whatever you think best.' Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her."

- (1) The ill-conceived plan has backfired. Hagar, the handmaid, disrespects barren Sarai, further adding to the embarrassment of being without child.
- (2) Sarai blames Abram (the "blame game" - see Adam and Eve, Gen. 3:11-13). Strife and contention are at a high point.

PROVERBS 30:21-23

"Under three things the earth trembles, under four it cannot bear up: ²² a servant who becomes king, a godless fool who gets plenty to eat, ²³ a contemptible woman who gets married, and a servant who displaces her mistress."

- (3) Sarai is given Abram's blessing to do what she thought best, not to be harsh and overbearing.

2. The Ishmael Story (16:7-16)

Hagar flees the mistreatment of her mistress. But the angel of the Lord meets her near a spring in the desert on her way back home to Egypt. The angel confirms that her child will be named Ishmael, and that he will be a free-spirited nomad ("wild donkey of a man") who clashes with his brothers.

GENESIS 16:9-10

"Then the angel of the LORD told her, 'Go back to your mistress and submit to her.' ¹⁰ The angel added, 'I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.'"

- a. The angel of the Lord commands her to return and submit to her mistress.
- b. The angel of the Lord promises numerous descendants through Hagar's son.
- c. The angel of the Lord prophesies that the child will indeed be a son, that he will be named Ishmael (Hb. "God hears"), that he will lead a nomadic, violent life and that he will live in "hostility toward his brothers" (i.e., the descendants of the future Isaac, son of Abram and Sarai... implications for today?)

◆ HISTORICAL/CULTURAL INSIGHT

"The barren wife is an object of pity, an archetype of the outcast in Hebrew society (e.g. Sarah [Gen. 16:1-6], Rachel [Gen. 29:31-30:24] and Hannah [1 Sam. 1:1-11])."

(Ryken, et al. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 67)

GENESIS 21:20-21

“God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer.²¹ While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.”

(“living in the Desert”...nomadic existence)

GENESIS 16:15

“So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne.”

C. Covenant Confirmation and Circumcision (Genesis 17)

◆ “ANGEL OF THE LORD”

This is the first occurrence of the phrase “angel of the Lord” in the OT (16:7FF), where it occurs 48 times. The parallel phrase “angel of God” also is found (cf. 21:17). Christian theologians often ascribe the identity of this “angel” (messenger) to a special God-appearance, namely for some, the preincarnate Person of Christ.

1. Preliminary observations (for Gen. 17)

- a. This chapter’s events occur about 13 years after the Hagar/Ishmael story (cp. Gen. 16:16 and 17:1). It has also been 24 years since Abram left Haran to go to the land God had promised (12:1-3). Abram and Sarai are still barren.
- b. Genesis 17 marks the formal confirmation/signification of the Abrahamic Covenant
 - (1) Call to Covenant...Genesis 12
 - (2) Formation of Covenant...Genesis 15
 - (3) Confirmation of Covenant...Genesis 17

Just as the “sign” of the rainbow signified the Noahic Covenant (Gen. 9:12-16), now the “sign” of circumcision will signify the Abrahamic Covenant.
- c. The word “covenant” appears 14 times in the chapter (NIV 84) highlighting the thematic emphasis. To be precise, in some occasions it refers to the formal, unconditional Abrahamic Covenant (e.g. vv. 4, 7, 11, 19, 21); on others it refers to the conditional covenant act of circumcision (e.g. 2, 9, 10, 13, 14).

2. Structural overview (for Gen. 17)

(Following structure adapted from Sarna, as quoted in Waltke, *Genesis*, 257)

A Abraham : father of nations : new name (1-8)

B Command of circumcision enacted (9-14)

A' Sarah : mother of nations : new name (15-22)

B' Command of circumcision enacted (23-27)

Note that the change of names is significant. Abram (“exalted father”) becomes Abraham (“father of a multitude”). Sarai (“my princess”) becomes Sarah (“the princess,” i.e., the royal princess). This is the only place in the Scriptures where a woman’s name is changed. In each case, the name change is attached to the promise of many “descendants,” one of the aspects of the total Abrahamic Covenant. Many years have passed since the promise of a heritage. This is the faith-test of the couple.

3. Chapter exposition (Gen. 17)

a. God’s appearance (17:1-3a)

GENESIS 17:1-3a

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, ‘I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless.² Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.’³ Abram fell facedown...”

- (1) This is God’s fifth appearance to Abram. It has been 23 years or so since the formalizing of the Covenant (Gen. 15), 13 years since the birth of Ishmael. But Abram and Sarai are still barren. For all they know, Ishmael may be their promised son as nothing else suggests otherwise.
- (2) God reveals Himself as “God Almighty” (Hb. El Shaddai). The actual meaning of the description is obscure. Likely it means “God the Powerful or the Strong” or it could mean “God the All-Sufficient.” It seems to be God’s primary name until the Mosaic period (cf. Ex. 6:2-3).
- (3) With this theophany (“God-appearance”), God commands Abram with two imperatives:
 - (a) “Walk before me”

(b) "Be blameless"

To walk before God speaks of full obedience. It is "to orient one's entire life to his (God's) presence, promises and demands" (Waltke, *Genesis*, 259). To be blameless is to be unblemished, that is, to live a life of integrity before God (it does not mean perfection without sin, but speaks of integrity of heart).

(4) Again, God confirms two promises. First, "I will confirm my covenant." This reaffirms God's commitment to His covenantal promise. (This is the first of seven times in this chapter that God declares unconditionally, "I will" rather than "If you then I"). Second, God promises to "greatly increase your numbers" (the "descendants" aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant).

(5) Abram's response was a response of humble worship and submission (cf. Lev. 9:24; Josh. 5:14).

b. God's part (17:3b-8)

GENESIS 17:3b-5

Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, ⁴ "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. ⁵ No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations."

(1) "As for me" delineates what God commits Himself to do (compare to Abraham's and Sarah's obligations which will follow).

(2) God reaffirms His covenant loyalty with the promise of "many nations" coming forth from Abraham. This is true not only of Isaac through Jacob (Israel) - Israelites, but the descendants of Abraham and Keturah (25:1-4), the descendants of Abraham and Hagar (Ishmaelites-Gen. 16:9-12; 12-18), the descendants of Isaac's other son, Esau (Gen. 36:9-43).

(3) This expanded promise (from your descendants to father of nations) also carries the name change for Abram and Sarai as well.

c. Abraham's part (17:9-14)

GENESIS 17:9-11

"Then God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. ¹⁰ This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you.'

- (1) “As for you” clarifies God’s expectations of Abraham now in covenantal relationship. The Covenant is unconditional (sure, trustworthy, binding) but the enjoyment (blessings) of such a covenant is predicated upon obedience to expressed responsibilities.
- (2) The covenant of circumcision (see earlier comments) becomes the “sign” (expected obedience) of those who desire to live by and enjoy the covenantal blessings attached to this Abrahamic Covenant. Just as salvation in the New Testament is a free gift (Ro. 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9), yet there is the expected response of obedience and good works (Eph. 2:10), so also the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant has expectations and blessings of obedience alongside it.
- (3) Why circumcision?
 - The reproductive-sexual member recalls the blessing of numerous descendants.
 - The ritual sets one apart to a specific faith-community or exclusion by non-participation (17:14).
 - The rite may have been chosen by God for hygienic and health reasons.
 - The rite involved blood, perhaps a reminder of the blood covenant aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15:9-11ff).

d. Sarah’s part (17:15-16)

GENESIS 17:15-16

“God also said to Abraham, ‘As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. ¹⁶ I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.’”

- (1) “As for Sarai” speaks of her role in this ongoing revelation of God.
- (2) Sarai’s name will change to Sarah. “My princess” will now become “the princess” from whom will come nations, even “kings of peoples.”
- (3) God reveals clearly that Ishmael is not the son of promise, but a son that will come forth from Abraham and Sarai. This is the first clear statement of this fact.

HEBREWS 11:11-12

“And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise.¹² And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.”

e. Abraham’s reactions (17:17-27)

GENESIS 17:17-18

“Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, ‘Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?’¹⁸ And Abraham said to God, ‘If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!’

- (1) Abraham laughs. Is this a laughter of joy/expectation at the outrageous idea of fathering a child at age 100 (conception at 99; birth at 100?) Or, is this a laughter born of disbelief that such a thing could not truly happen? Also, Abraham “fell facedown.” This could be a posture of humble and thankful trust or to cover up an inner skepticism. Scholars are divided over the question.
- (2) Abraham pleads for Ishmael’s status, that he, too, might live under God’s blessing. God clearly indicates that the miracle-child will be the fulfillment of the “descendants” promise (17:19, 21) but that Ishmael would indeed be blessed (17:20).
- (3) In response, 99 year old Abraham and 13-year-old Ishmael were circumcised on the same day (17:24-25) as well as the male servants of the household (17:23).

D. Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18-19)

1. Preliminary observations

- a. The text gives no chronological marker as to the timing of this event, but the implication is that Sarah is not yet pregnant (though will bear the promised child within the year, “at the appointed time next year” – 18:14).
- b. This event is the sixth revelation of God to Abraham. Some rabbinic tradition suggests that Abraham was recovering from his circumcision, though there is no direct Biblical support for this.
- c. This two-chapter story will highlight Abraham’s role as a prophet of God (18:16-19; 20:7) and intercessor on behalf of others (18:23-32).

- d. Further, the contrast of Abraham (17:1 “walk before me and be blameless”) and Lot (the man of “flesh”, chose the best land to live—13:10-11) are in stark relief. Abraham is the man of faith; Lot is the man of the flesh (carnality).

2. Structural overview

Contrast of Two Men

- A LORD appeared to Abraham . . . three men (18:1-2)
 - B Abraham hosts the three visitors (18:3-8)
 - C Conversation and laughter: About life (Isaac) (18:9-15)
 - D Intercession before God: To spare cities (18:16-32)
 - E LORD leaves Abraham (18:33)
- A' LORD's messengers appeared to Lot... two men (19:1)
 - B' Lot hosts the two visitors (19:2-3)
 - C' Conversation and alarm: About violence (Rape) (19:4-5)
 - D' Intercession before men of Sodom: To spare two visitors (19:6-11)
 - E' Lot's family leaves Sodom (19:12-29)

Appendix: Sordid story: Lot and Daughters (19:30-38)

3. Chapters' exposition (Gen. 18-19)

- a. Abraham: The three visitors (18:1-15)

GENESIS 18:1-2

“The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day.² Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.”

- (1) The Lord “appeared”; Abraham “saw” the men. The encounter will confirm the birth of Abraham and Sarah’s child; the encounter will position Abraham as a prophet privy to God’s plans and judgments.

- (2) The “three” will later (19:1) become “two.” Who is the third man; what became of him?
- (3) The location, “near the great trees of Mamre,” identifies Abram’s home as still being near Hebron (13:18; 14:13). Hebron was located to the west of the Dead Sea and south of Jerusalem in the hill country of Judah. It would eventually be the burial spot for Abraham and Sarah.
- (4) Abraham “bowed low to the ground” as a sign of respect. Then, according to the custom of oriental hospitality, he provided refreshment, food and drink. (18:3-5ff).
- (5) One of the three guests is the more prominent and speaks on behalf of all. He asks the whereabouts of Sarah (18:9) and the text then reveals the true identity of their third visitor. (cp. v. 10 and v. 13).

GENESIS 18:10

“Then one of them said, ‘I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.’ Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him.”

- (6) Sarah laughs at the preposterous notion, but is called out by the Lord.

GENESIS 18:13-14

“Then the LORD said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh and say, “Will I really have a child, now that I am old?”’¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

The supernatural insight of what Sarah was doing and thinking outside the tent and the reaffirmation of the child to come must have bolstered the weak faith of Sarah, perhaps even Abraham. Laughter will become the name of the child (Hb. Isaac = laughter or he laughs).

- b. Abraham: Interceding for Sodom (18:16-33)

GENESIS 18:16-19

“When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way.¹⁷ Then the LORD said, ‘Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?¹⁸ Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him.¹⁹ For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.’”

- (1) The text reveals the internal dialogue of God concerning His very soon action against Sodom ("the LORD said," perhaps better, "thought"). Abraham is a prophet (20:7) and God reveals His intentions through them (i.e., through prophets).

AMOS 3:7

"Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets."

- (2) The internal question—should I hide from Abraham—is an obvious "no."
 - (a) Abraham will father "a great and powerful nation."
 - (b) Abraham and his offspring will realize the covenantal aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant. Nation (children) speaks of "descendants"; blessed speaks of the "blessing all nations" aspect (see earlier Abrahamic Covenant chart, p. 20).
 - (c) Abraham must now begin to see, understand, embrace and model God's kind of justice, righteousness and judgment. Sodom will be a dramatic illustration.

GENESIS 18:20-21

"Then the LORD said, 'The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous ²¹ that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.'"

- (a) God is not capricious. He will act in accordance to what actually is ("go down and see").
- (b) "Outcry" (speaking here of public, sinful activity) is contrasted to Abraham's imperative (v. 19 – "doing what is right"). In the Hebrew language the two contrasting words carry a similar pronunciation, thus highlighting the contrast of unjust and just.

GENESIS 18:22-23

"The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD. ²³ Then Abraham approached him and said: 'Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?'"

- (1) Abraham is a man of faith (Gen. 15:6), but is he a man of compassion (his nephew, Lot, lives in Sodom). Further, can he also be an advocate for righteous actions and just

dealings? Can the righteous be spared while the morally wicked are punished?

- (2) Abraham “remained standing before the LORD.” His intercession is about to begin. “Then Abraham approached him (God) and said...” This is the first time in recorded Scripture that man takes the initiative with God.
- (3) In the ensuing dialogue (18:23-32) Abraham carefully intercedes for the possible righteous ones in the condemned cities. Note that his appeal to God is not simply for mercy, but for the city to be spared for the sake of the righteous.
- (4) Abraham poses the question to God: What if there are...
 - 50 righteous
 - 45 righteous
 - 40 righteous
 - 30 righteous
 - 20 righteous
 - 10 righteous

INSIGHT

“Ten is still a community; fewer than ten can be saved individually, as happens in Genesis 19.”

(Waltke, *Genesis*, 271)

- (5) Abraham’s bold intercession is a model of godly persistence. Jesus commended this quality in His teaching on prayer (cf. Luke 11:5-10; Luke 18:1-8).
- c. Judgment: Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed (19:1-29)

The 19th chapter of Genesis stands in stark contrast to the 18th. Abraham has interceded for ten righteous people and the averting of judgment. The moral condition of the city will not find ten righteous. The moral perversion of the city (evidenced in the mob—see 19:5) validates the “outcry” (18:20) that came before the Lord.

 - (1) Ten righteous people are not to be found in Sodom; judgment is deserving.
 - (2) Lot, Abraham’s nephew, is a believer (cf. 2 Pet. 2:6-9) but has been shaped and molded by the sinful city. He is a man of “flesh” (carnality, worldly) not a man of blameless lifestyle. He illustrates what New Testament writers warn of:

I CORINTHIANS 3:1-2

“Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly (carnal, fleshly)—mere infants in Christ.² I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.”

ROMANS 12:1-2

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

I JOHN 2:15-19

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. ¹⁶ For everything in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷ The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever. ¹⁸ Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.”

(3) Lot’s own family has been infected by the unrighteousness of the city. His sons-in-law will laugh and refuse to leave the city (19:14). His wife will reluctantly leave but disobey the angels’ admonition and “look back” (“became a pillar of salt”-19:26). His daughters will be saved from destruction but will conceive an immoral plan to have children by their father (19:30-38). Apparently, Lot could take his daughters out of Sodom but could not take “the Sodom” out of his daughters.

E. **Abraham and Abimelech** (Genesis 20)

(Sister Story #2)

Following the dramatic events of the Sodom and Gomorrah epic, the reader of Scripture might expect the birth of Isaac to occur at this very juncture. But what follows is another failure of Abraham. Though a man of faith, he, like so many, also has “clay feet.”

GENESIS 20:1-2

“Now Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur. For a while he stayed in Gerar, ² and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, ‘She is my sister.’ Then Abimelech king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her.”

The event is a “second sister story.” Earlier (Gen. 12:10-20), Abraham received the promise of land, blessing and descendants, yet put it all

at risk in Egypt. He and Sarah deceived Pharaoh by telling that she was his sister. Only by divine intervention was Sarah rescued from Pharaoh's harem.

Now, Abraham and Sarah have moved south into the hill country of the Philistines (as it will later be known). Abimelech (a title, not a proper name), the King of Gerar will again take Sarah into his household. This may have been more of a treaty/alliance-building arrangement than a child-bearing one.

1. Abimelech and God (20:3-8)

God reveals to Abimelech by means of a dream (20:3-5) that Sarah is in fact the wife of Abraham. Abimelech protests that God surely would not destroy an innocent nation because of Abraham and Sarah's deception.

GENESIS 20:6-7

"Then God said to him in the dream, 'Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her.⁷ Now return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all who belong to you will die.'"

- a. God acknowledges Abimelech's innocence.
- b. God commands the immediate return of Sarah to her husband.
- c. God reveals that Abraham is a prophet and must pray for Abimelech or he will suffer death along with others.

2. Abimelech and Abraham (20:9-15)

GENESIS 20:9

"Then Abimelech called Abraham in and said, 'What have you done to us? How have I wronged you that you have brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that should never be done.'"

- a. A pagan king upbraids the "man of faith" for his deception, an act of unbelief.
- b. The prophet of the true God, the recipient of covenantal promise, the one charged to walk before God "blameless" and in righteousness has acted unrighteously before the King of Gerar.

INSIGHT

Compare Abraham to the reluctant prophet, Jonah, who fled on a boat to escape his calling. In Jonah's story, the frightened sailors and the repentant King of Nineveh showed more spiritual heart than did the prophet. A similar charge could be made against Abraham as well.

GENESIS 20:11-13

“Abraham replied, ‘I said to myself, There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’¹² Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife.¹³ And when God had me wander from my father’s household, I said to her, ‘This is how you can show your love to me: Everywhere we go, say of me, ‘He is my brother.’”

- a. Abraham attempts to excuse his behavior by supposing a lack of fear of God. What a touch of irony: Abimelech fears God apparently more than Abraham.
- b. Abraham clarifies that actually Sarah was his half-sister (same father, different mother). This would later be forbidden in Mosaic legislation (cf. Lev. 18:9, 11; 20:17; Deut. 27:22).
- c. Abimelech gives livestock, servants, and silver to Abraham to settle the matter of Sarah’s honor. Yet, the king still needs the prophet’s intercession.

GENESIS 20:17-18

“Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife and his female slaves so they could have children again,¹⁸ for the LORD had kept all the women in Abimelech’s household from conceiving because of Abraham’s wife Sarah.”

◆ INSIGHT

Here also is dramatic irony: when Sarah is among them, they (wife and slave girls of Abimelech) become barren; when she leaves, wombs are opened but she (Sarah) remains barren

(Waltke, *Genesis*, 288).

F. Birth of Isaac (Genesis 21) (Departure of Hagar and Ishmael)

1. The birth of Isaac (21:1-7)

GENESIS 21:1-4

“Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised.² Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him.³ Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him.⁴ When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him.”

- a. The “descendant” promised in the Abrahamic Covenant arrives in the birth of Isaac, the child of promise (and of the Covenant).

GENESIS 15:4

“Then the word of the LORD came to him: ‘This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.’”

GENESIS 17:6

“I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.”

Later historical books (Samuel, Kings) will document the truth of this promise. Further, the “special” King of the line of Judah is also faintly cast (later, Gen. 49:8-12 and Num. 24:7-9).

- b. In Covenantal obedience, Isaac is circumcised on the eighth day as required (17:2). Abraham is one hundred years old, Sarah is ninety (17:17); the event is a miraculous birth, one of several recorded in Scripture.

HEBREWS 11:11-12

“And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise.¹² And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.”

2. Departure of Hagar and Ishmael

GENESIS 21:8-10

“The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast.⁹ But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking,¹⁰ and she said to Abraham, ‘Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.’”

- a. Hagar had earlier mocked Sarah and her barrenness (16:4-5). Now her son, Ishmael (17 years of age or so), mocks and ridicules the child of Isaac (probably 3 or so, the common time of weaning in ancient cultures). This is but a precursor for the animosity between the descendants of Ishmael and the descendants of Abraham.
- b. Sarah perceives Ishmael (Abraham’s son) as a threat to Isaac’s inheritance rights (v. 10). Before his own death and after the death of Sarah, Abraham will bequeath all that he owns (i.e. inheritance) to Isaac. However, he will send his other children away with gifts (25:5-6).
- c. Abraham was distressed by Sarah’s insistence but God commanded Abraham to heed his wife’s advice (21:11-13). Sarah is demonstrating a measure of faith in the covenantal promises of numerous offspring through miraculous Isaac.
- d. Hagar and Ishmael are given provisions and sent away. Hagar soon despairs but God (angel of God) promises a future for Ishmael; he will father a great nation (21:14-21).

G. The Treaty at Beersheba (Genesis 21)

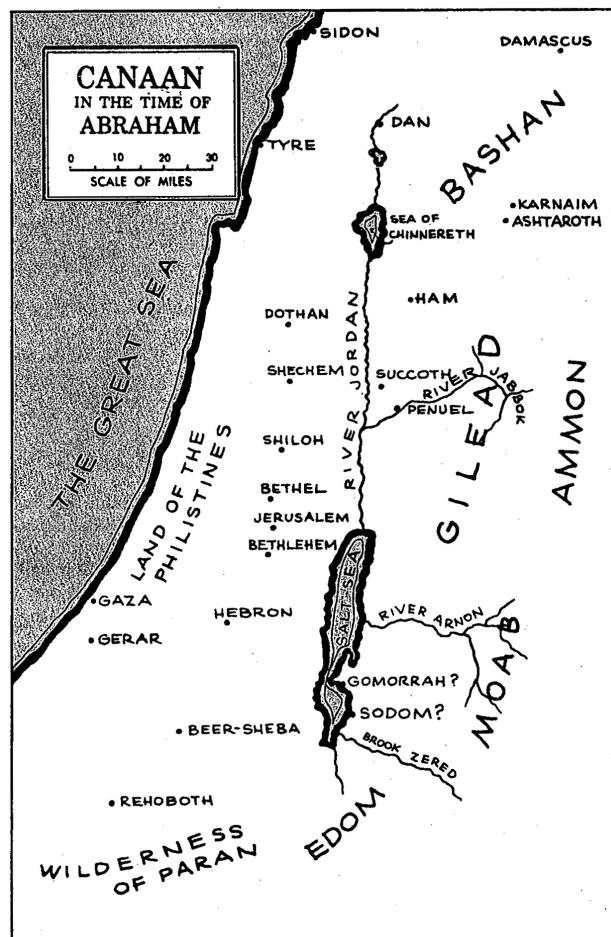
This section of Abraham’s life (see chart, p. 8, “Vertical Chart”) draws to a close with the reappearance of Abimelech. Whereas the first conflict focused on the precarious state of the promised descendant

(seed) and Sarah's uncertain place in Abimelech's household (harem?; Gen. 20), this conflict concerns water rights in the "land" covenantally promised to Abraham. Thus, two aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant are the focal points in the disputes.

1. Abimelech wants a peace treaty (21:22-24).
2. Abraham wants an agreement (treaty or covenant) concerning the water rights and well at the place now called Beersheba ("well of oath" or "well of seven").

GENESIS 21:32-34

"After the treaty had been made at Beersheba, Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his forces returned to the land of the Philistines.³³ Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Eternal God.³⁴ And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines for a long time."





SESSION 3

ABRAHAM

AND ISSAC

SESSION 3

ABRAHAM AND ISSAC

I. PRAYER

II. PANORAMA TIMELINE (Movements #1 and #2)

"Prologue"

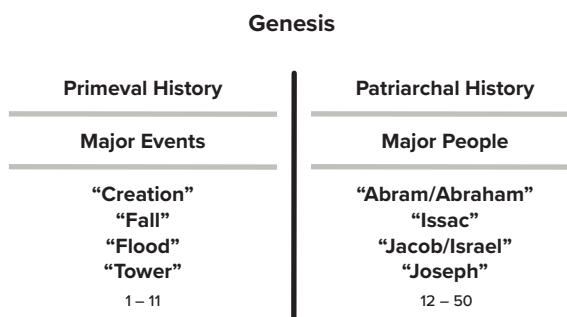


"Patriarchs"



III. OVERVIEW OF GENESIS

A. Chart: Focus on Key Events/Key People



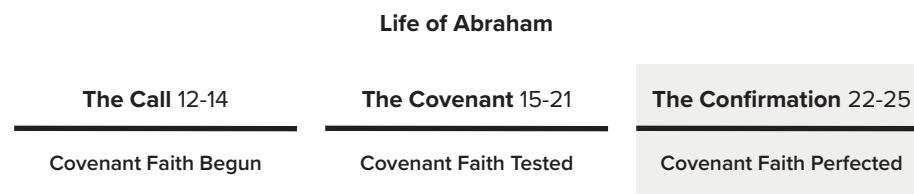
B. Outline: "Toledot" Sections

Creation (1:1-2:3)

1. Toledot of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4-4:26)
2. Toledot of Adam (5:1-6:8)
3. Toledot of Noah (6:9-9:29)
4. Toledot of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10:1-11:9)
5. Toledot of Shem (11:10-26)
6. Toledot of Terah (11:27-25:11)
7. Toledot of Ishmael (25:12-18)
8. Toledot of Isaac (25:19-35:29)
9. Toledot of Esau, the father of Edom (twice) (36:1-8; 36:9-37:1)
10. Toledot of Jacob (37:2-50:26)

IV. LIFE OF ABRAHAM

A. Horizontal Chart



B. Abraham: The Call (Gen. 12-14)

*Covered in Session 1

C. Abraham: The Covenant (Gen. 15-21)

*Covered in Session 2

D. Abraham: The Confirmation (Gen. 22-25)

1. Testing of Abraham (22)
2. Death of Sarah (23)
(Cave of Machpelah)
3. Isaac and Rebekah (24)
4. Death of Abraham (25)

V. ABRAHAM: THE CONFIRMATION (Genesis 22-25)

A. Testing of Abraham (Gen. 22)

1. Background

Abraham is the man of “faith.” This is attested in the Book of Genesis (cf. Gen. 15:6) as well as the New Testament.

HEBREWS 11:11 (NIV 84)

“And by faith Abraham, even though he was past age-and Sarah herself was barren-was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.”

ROMANS 4:3, 20

“What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” ²⁰“Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God.”

Abraham's faith was tested at several points in his life, not the least of which was God's call to Abraham to make personal sacrifices (that would have tested his faith):

- Leave his home and family (Gen. 12:11)
- Separation from his nephew, Lot (Gen. 13:8-9)
- Sending away of his son, Ishmael (Gen. 21:8-13)
- Offer his son of promise (Isaac) on the altar (Gen. 22:1-2)

2. Exposition: Genesis 22:1-19

The outline of this testing event is suggested by Ross (*Creation and Blessing*, 392).

a. Presentation of the test (1-2)

GENESIS 22:1-2

"Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, 'Abraham!' 'Here I am,' he replied.² Then God said, 'Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.'

(1) This event is the 8th revelation of God to Abraham.

(2) The event occurs several years ("sometime later") after the treaty at Beersheba (Gen. 21:22-34). The Jewish historian, Josephus, suggested that Isaac was twenty-five, but this seems high. At least a decade has passed as Isaac is old enough to both accompany his father and carry the burden of the sacrificial wood (22:6).

(3) The event is a "test" of Abraham's faith (better than "tempt" in KJV). A test is to prove the worthiness or the strength; a temptation is to entice to evil or to destroy.

Testing to strengthen (approve):

JAMES 1:2-4

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

I KINGS 10:1

"When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relationship to the LORD, she came to test Solomon with hard questions."

DANIEL 1:12

"Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink."

Tempting to destroy:

JAMES 1:13-15

"When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."

I PETER 5:8-9

"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings."

◆ **INSIGHT**

"Life is a succession of tests, for character is only possible through discipline."

(W.H.G. Thomas quoted by Constable, 165).

- (4) "Here I am" is the only recorded word of Abraham in this story, a common response used by those related by intimacy or respect (father-son, king-subject). The word (just one word in Hb.) may hint at Abraham and God's closeness and Abraham's willingness to do the unspeakable.
- (5) The command by God is highlighted by three imperatives:
 - (a) Take
 - (b) Go
 - (c) Sacrifice
- (6) "Only son" refers to Isaac's privileged status as the only son of promise. Ishmael is Abraham's son, but not the covenant-promise son.
- (7) "Moriah" occurs here and in 2 Chronicles 3:1. The location is best seen as the future temple site on the temple mount in Jerusalem, namely Mt. Moriah (a journey of about 50 miles from Beersheba).

b. Compliance with the instructions (3-10)

Abraham sets out from Beersheba with his son, Isaac, and two servants. Wood for the offering is also taken (uncertainty of wood at unfamiliar destination?).

GENESIS 22:4-5

“On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.⁵ He said to his servants, ‘Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.’”

- (1) The journey takes “three days.” The text does not record Abraham’s thoughts, but the length of the journey solidifies his obedient resolve.
- (2) Wood for sacrifice speaks of preparation for worship. “We will worship” includes Abraham and his son only. The servants are to remain with the donkey.
- (3) “We will come back” interjects a surprising note in the tense storyline. For Abraham to suggest that “we” would return from the mountaintop worship experience could only mean one of two logical conclusions: (1) God would intervene before Abraham completed the sacrifice (2) God will raise this covenant-promise (“only son”) from the grave. Which did Abraham believe?

HEBREWS 11:17-19

“By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son,¹⁸ even though God had said to him, ‘It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.’¹⁹ Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.”

Isaac (perhaps a teenager, perhaps a young man) is notably compliant to his father’s wishes (a man well past 100 years). Isaac’s restraint and faith in his father is commendable. His only question is chilling, “where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” (22:7).

GENESIS 22:8

“Abraham answered, ‘God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.’ And the two of them went on together.”

- (1) “God himself” could be translated “God will provide for Himself” or even, “God will provide Himself” for the offering. Either way, the emphasis is upon divine provision for the sacrifice.
- (2) Abraham will later name the place “The LORD Will Provide” (22:14) or “Jehovah Jireh” or better, “YHWH Yireh.”

Obedient in his faith, Abraham made preparations for offering his son on the newly constructed altar. The Canaanites regularly practiced human sacrifices which were later specifically condemned and denied to the Israelites (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:1-5; Deut. 18:10). This is certainly one of the greatest, most difficult texts to theologically understand. How could God ask of Abraham what would be seen as repugnant in later Israelite history?

c. Compliance with the instructions (10-19)

GENESIS 22:12-14

“Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”¹³ Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.¹⁴ So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.”

(1) God intervenes and states that “Now I know . . .”
“Did Abraham’s choice surprise God? Was the outcome weighing in the balance?

PSALM 147:5

“Great is our LORD and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.”

(2) The whole of Scripture affirms that God is omniscient, that is, He knows all things knowable. Such knowledge can be theoretical (known but yet not actualized) or experiential (known and actualized).

MATTHEW 11:20-21

“Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent.²¹ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.”

Note that Jesus appealed to theoretical knowledge that was known but not experienced (actualized). The statement was true nonetheless. Thus, God’s knowledge of Abraham’s choice became actualized (“Now I know...” experientially) at the point of his obedience.

GENESIS 22:15-18

“The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time¹⁶ and said, “I swear by myself, declares

◆ **SACRIFICING HIS SON?**

1. God’s plan was not for actual sacrifice; this was a test of obedient willingness.
2. Later Mosaic legislation would clearly prohibit child sacrifice (to Molech; cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:2).
3. Abraham’s trust must be full and complete in God’s Person and Promises; either intervention to prevent or resurrection from death are the only two options.
4. It is within God’s sovereign control over all creation is to give or take life. This is not an immoral command of God (though it would be to a false god); after all, God did sacrifice His own Son at Calvary (Jn 3:16).

(Adapted from Geisler and Howe, *When Critics Ask*, 51-52)

the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,¹⁷ I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies,¹⁸ and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”

(1) This is the 9th revelation to Abraham; it is also the 5th affirmation of the great Abrahamic Covenant.

(2) Note the Covenant aspects:

- a) “Bless” (17, 18)
- b) “Descendants” (17) or “Offspring” (18)
- c) “Cities of their enemies” (or land) (17)

(3) The promise of blessing to all nations is restated again (18). Note Paul’s New Testament application.

GALATIANS 3:6-9

“So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”⁷ Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham.⁸ Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.”⁹ So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

3. Transition: Genesis 22:20-24

This passage bridges from the high point, the mature and full expression of Abraham’s faith (22:1-19), to the death of Sarah and the search for a wife for Isaac (Gen. 23). Thus, the emerging storyline will begin to focus on Isaac.

Perhaps structurally, this can be seen as follows (in Chiastic form):

A Genealogy of Terah (11:27-31)

B Abraham’s Initial Faith Call (12:1-8)

B’ Abraham’s Climatic Faith Demonstration (22:1-19)

A’ Genealogy of Nahor-Terah’s son (22:20-24)

B. Death of Sarah (Genesis 23)

1. The death at Kiriath Arba (or Hebron) (23:1-2)

GENESIS 23:1-2

“Sarah lived to be a hundred and twenty-seven years old.² She died at Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her.”

- a. Sarah lived to be 127 years; Abraham at her death was 137 years while Isaac was 37 years and still unmarried. In all of the Scriptures, Sarah is the only woman whose age at death is recorded. This speaks of her importance.
- b. Sarah was rightfully seen in later Israelite history as the nation’s mother.

ISAIAH 51:1-2

“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness
and who seek the LORD:
Look to the rock from which you were cut
and to the quarry from which you were hewn;

² look to Abraham, your father,
and to Sarah, who gave you birth.
When I called him he was only one man,
and I blessed him and made him many.”

- c. “Kiriath Arba” means “City of Four”. Perhaps the city was characterized by four separate regions, the Hittites occupying one. Modern day Jerusalem has four quarters in the Old City (Arab, Jewish, Armenian, Christian).
- d. “In the land of Canaan”
Hearken the reader to recall that “the land” was promised to Abraham as a part (aspect) of the Covenant (Gen. 15:18-21). Recall the three aspects of the Abraham Covenant:



2. The cave of Machpelah (23:3-20)

While Abraham undeniably mourned the loss of his wife (23:2), the bulk of the text centers upon the negotiations for the land (and the burial cave). This is the first acquisition of property in the Promised Land and gives Abraham the status of landowner, not simply an “alien and a stranger (foreigner)” (23:4). The tension of owning land coupled with covenantal promises guide the theological theme of Genesis 23. Though the mother of the future nation had died, Canaan (“the land”) is the new home. Sarah will not be taken out of this promised land.

a. Round one of negotiations (3-6)

GENESIS 23:5-6

“The Hittites replied to Abraham, ⁶ ‘Sir, listen to us. You are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will refuse you his tomb for burying your dead.’”

- (1) Abraham refers to himself as an “alien and stranger,” thus one of lowly status. The Hittites refer to him as a “mighty prince” (lit. “prince of God”), a bestowal of respect and honor as well as an acknowledgement of God’s favor upon Abraham.
- (2) Abraham asks to purchase a “burial site” (4), but the Hittites offer a choice “tomb.” There seems to be reluctance to sell land as a permanent possession.

b. Round two of negotiations (7-11)

GENESIS 23:7-9

“Then Abraham rose and bowed down before the people of the land, the Hittites. ⁸ He said to them, “If you are willing to let me bury my dead, then listen to me and intercede with Ephron son of Zohar on my behalf⁹ so he will sell me the cave of Machpelah, which belongs to him and is at the end of his field. Ask him to sell it to me for the full price as a burial site among you.”

- (1) Abraham’s bowing before the Hittites (who have called him a prince of God) speaks of his humble, dependent bargaining status. This is the only recorded instance of Abraham bowing to the inhabitants of Canaan.
- (2) Abraham specifically asks that Ephron might sell the cave of Machpelah and at “full price,” that is, a generous amount for an irrevocable sale.

Ephron initially refuses to sell but is willing for Abraham to bury his dead in the cave. This may be an evidence of the bargaining process, a cultural custom known to Abraham and the Hittites. Note, as well, that Ephron speaks for himself and does not wait for the other Hittites to act as mediators (23:10-11).

c. Round three of negotiations (12-16)

GENESIS 23:12-14

“Again Abraham bowed down before the people of the land ¹³ and he said to Ephron in their hearing, ‘Listen to me, if you will. I will pay the price of the field. Accept it from me so I can bury my dead there.’”

- (1) Abraham counters that he wishes to purchase (irrevocably) the field (not just the cave) and he is willing to pay “the price of the field.”
- (2) Ephron consents to four hundred shekels of silver to which Abraham agrees (23:16). The agreement is fixed, witnesses are present, and payment is rendered.

d. Conclusion to the negotiations (17-20)

GENESIS 23:19-20

“Afterward Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre (which is at Hebron) in the land of Canaan. ²⁰ So the field and the cave in it were deeded to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site.”

C. Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 24)

1. Introduction to the Story (24:1)

GENESIS 24:1

“Abraham was now very old, and the LORD had blessed him in every way.”

- a. Abraham is described as very old and very blessed.
- b. This verse introduces the longest, single story in the Book of Genesis. The story points to the rising importance of Isaac (our next patriarchal figure) and his wife who will bear sons.

2. Abraham’s instructions to his servant (24:2-9)

GENESIS 24:3-4

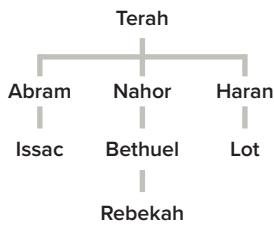
“I want you to swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living,⁴ but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac.”

- a. According to the custom of the day, the parents (in this case, Abraham alone) arranged the marriages of their children (though Isaac is a grown man).
- b. The promised son and heir to the covenant promises must not marry a Canaanite. Abraham sends his “chief servant” (Eliezer?) to find a suitable bride from among Abraham’s relatives. (Refer again to the transitional genealogical information previously given in 22:20-24).
- c. The servant will have a successful journey. Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel (brother of Laban) will soon enter the picture. Note her relation by lineage to Isaac (next page).

◆ PREVIEW

“On the theological level, the scene wrestles with the interplay of human responsibility (faith in action) and divine initiative (perfectly coordinated circumstances).”

(Waltke, *Genesis*, 323)



Compare Genesis 11:27-32 with 22:20-24

GENESIS 24:6-7

“Make sure that you do not take my son back there,” Abraham said. ⁷ ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, who brought me out of my father’s household and my native land and who spoke to me and promised me on oath, saying, ‘To your offspring I will give this land’—he will send his angel before you so that you can get a wife for my son from there.’

- a. Should Abraham die, Isaac must remain in the land. Abraham left relatives and in obedience to God’s call went to the unknown place (“to the land I will show you” – 12:1). His son of the covenantal promise must not return there.
- b. Abraham reminded his servant that God’s Covenant promised “land” and “offspring.” Isaac needs to stay in the land and with the right wife (“will send his angel before you”) produce offspring.

3. The servant (providentially) meets Rebekah (24:10-27)

The servant obediently departed with ten camels plus “all kinds of good things” (bridal price). His destination is the homeland of Abraham’s relatives in Aram Naharaim (Northwest Mesopotamia) and he arrives at the city of Nahor (10-11).

- a. The prayer (12-14)

GENESIS 24:12

“Then he prayed, “LORD, God of my master Abraham, make me successful today, and show kindness to my master Abraham.”

- (1) This is the first recorded prayer for specific guidance in the Scriptures.
- (2) The servant identifies with the Lord, the God of Abraham. His faith will be remarkable.
- (3) In his prayer he asks for a confirming sign that the right choice of a bride would draw water for the servant and for his camels (14).

- b. The answer to prayer (15-21)

- (1) Before the prayer is finished, Rebekah appears (15).
- (2) Rebekah fulfills the confirming sign (17-20).

GENESIS 24:21

“Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the LORD had made his journey successful.”

- c. The aftermath of the prayer (22-27)
 - (1) After receiving a goodwill gift, Rebekah identifies herself with her family pedigree, assaying the concern of Abraham.
 - (2) Rebekah invites (law of eastern hospitality and gratitude for extravagant gifts) the servant to stay at her home.

GENESIS 24:26-27

“Then the man bowed down and worshiped the LORD,²⁷ saying, ‘Praise be to the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master. As for me, the LORD has led me on the journey to the house of my master’s relatives.’”

The servant’s response is noteworthy. He worships the God who has guided him to a successful search and discovery. He acknowledges God’s hidden hand (the clear work of God’s providential care).

4. The servant in the household of Bethuel (24:28-61)

GENESIS 24:28-31

“The young woman ran and told her mother’s household about these things.²⁹ Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban, and he hurried out to the man at the spring.³⁰ As soon as he had seen the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister’s arms, and had heard Rebekah tell what the man said to her, he went out to the man and found him standing by the camels near the spring.³¹ “Come, you who are blessed by the LORD,” he said. “Why are you standing out here? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels.”

- a. Rebekah’s brother, Laban, hurries to meet the stranger (bearing gifts). Laban will figure prominently in the later drama between Jacob (Rebekah’s son) and his uncle Laban (Gen. 29ff).
- b. “As soon as he had seen the nose ring” indicates that Laban’s motives are based in greed. This will become more pronounced in later chapters. Rebekah, on the other hand, displayed courtesy, respect and hospitality before the display or gifting of gold rings and bracelets.

The New Testament issues this warning:

I TIMOTHY 6:17-19

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.¹⁸ Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.¹⁹ In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

GENESIS 24:34-36

“So he said, ‘I am Abraham’s servant.³⁵ The LORD has blessed my master abundantly, and he has become wealthy. He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys.³⁶ My master’s wife Sarah has borne him a son in her old age, and he has given him everything he owns.’”

- a. The servant tells an abbreviated story of Abraham, Sarah and Isaac and how they have been blessed by God. He highlights his mission to find a wife for Isaac from among Abraham’s relatives (24:37-38).
- b. Again, in slow and deliberate detail, the servant of Abraham relates the prayer fulfillment of meeting Rebekah.

GENESIS 24:47b-49

“Then I put the ring in her nose and the bracelets on her arms,⁴⁸ and I bowed down and worshiped the LORD. I praised the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me on the right road to get the granddaughter of my master’s brother for his son.⁴⁹ Now if you will show kindness and faithfulness to my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so I may know which way to turn.”

- a. Laban and Bethuel acknowledge the leadership of God and offer Rebekah as the bride for Isaac (24:50-51).
- b. The servant “bowed down to the ground before the Lord” and distributed gifts (bridal price).

GENESIS 24:55-58

“But her brother and her mother replied, ‘Let the young woman remain with us ten days or so; then you may go.’⁵⁶ But he said to them, ‘Do not detain me, now that the LORD has granted success to my journey. Send me on my way so I may go to my master.’⁵⁷ Then they said, ‘Let’s call the young woman and ask her about it.’⁵⁸ So they called Rebekah and asked her, ‘Will you go with this man? “I will go,” she said.’”

- a. The servant is anxious to successfully return to his master. But Rebekah's mother and brother (Laban) ask for "ten days or so." The Hebrew expression could indicate a much longer time (months... over a year).
- b. Yet, the servant is determined and appeals to the Lord's guidance in this venture. The question is put to Rebekah who decisively replies, "I will go" (Mathews, p. 344, translates, "I want to go"). Thus, Rebekah demonstrates her faith in the God of Abraham and like him, she is willing by faith to go to a new land (cf. 12:1, 4).

GENESIS 24:66-67

"Then the servant told Isaac all he had done.⁶⁷ Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."

D. Death of Abram (Genesis 25)

1. His wife

GENESIS 25:1-2

"Abraham had taken another wife, whose name was Keturah.
² She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah"

- a. Here, Keturah is called Abraham's "wife." But Genesis 25:6 refers to his sons of his "concubines." The fact that Abraham bequeathed his wealth to Isaac (25:5) argues that Keturah was a privileged concubine (who bore six sons).
- b. "Took" (NIV 84) should be translated "had taken." There is no sure chronological marker to date this event. Probably it is given here to contrast the favored/promised son with other sons.

GENESIS 25:7-8

"Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years.⁸ Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people."

- a. Abraham dies at 175 years, 100 of which he lived in "the land."
- b. Abraham died at a good old age, even as it had been promised to him (cf. 15:15).
- c. Abraham is buried by his sons Isaac and Ishmael in the cave of Machpelah in the place where Sarah was buried (sons listed in order of importance, not birth order).
- d. "Gathered to his people" (25:8) cannot simply mean, buried in proximity to his ancestors. The tenor of the passage is to be

brought to some kind of fellowship or association. This likely indicates some kind of belief in life after death.

GENESIS 25:11

“After Abraham’s death, God blessed his son Isaac, who then lived near Beer Lahai Roi.”

- a. From the passing of Abraham, now the story continues with Isaac and his offspring to come.
- b. “God blessed Isaac” reminds the reader of Abrahamic Covenant blessing.

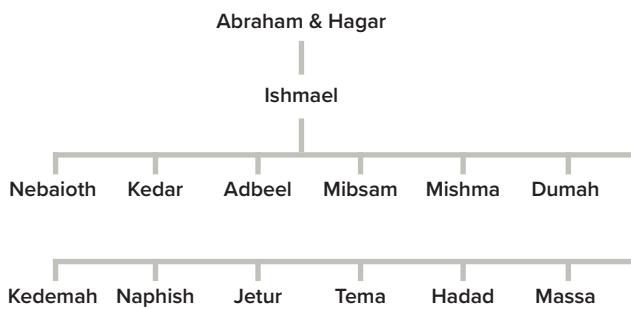
VI. “TOLEDOT” OF ISHMAEL (Genesis 25)

This section is the 7th of 10 “toledots” (or, what became of...) in Genesis (see chart, Session 3, p. 50). Ishmael, the son of Abraham and Sarah’s maid servant, Hagar, has 12 sons (“tribal rulers”). Ishmael lived for 137 years and the Scriptures note of his offspring, “And they lived in hostility toward all their brothers” (25:18); this fulfills the prophecy of 16:12.

INSIGHT

“Isaac and Ishmael, though spiritually distinct from inception, politically begin together in the burial of their father. The Primary History, however, traces a growing political hostility between Israel and these ‘brothers’ that spring from Abraham (i.e. the various Arabian tribes through Keturah and Ishmael; cf. Judg. 8:24), from Abraham’s brother Nahor (i.e., Arameans; cf. 1 Kgs. 20; 2 Kgs. 5; 6:24-70), and from Haran (i.e., the Ammonites and Moabites from Lot; cf. Num. 20:14-21; 21:4; 22:1; Judg. 3:12-13; 11:1-18; 1 Sam. 14:47; 2 Sam. 8:2, 12-14; 1 Kgs. 11:14-22; 2 Kgs. 13:20).

The twelve sons of Ishmael:



VI. “TOLEDOT” OF ISAAC (Genesis 25-35)

A. Overall Structure (Gen. 25:19-35:29)

Note the chiastic structure (adapted from Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 169).

A **Journeys Begin:** Jacob and Esau (25:19-34)

B **Isaac and the Philistines** (26:1-33)

C **Jacob Steals Esau's Blessing** (26:34-28:9)

D **Jacob Meets God at Bethel** (28:10-22)

E **Jacob at Laban's House** (29:1-14)

F **Jacob Deceived:** Marries Leah and
Rachel (29:15:30)

HINGE!

G **Birth of Jacob's Sons**
(29:31-30:24)

F' **Jacob Deceives:** Outwits Laban
(30:25-31:1)

E' **Jacob leaves Laban's House** (31:2-32:1)

D' **Jacob Meets Angels at Mahanaim** (32:2-3)

C' **Jacob Returns Esau's Blessing** (32:4-33:20)

B' **Dinah and the Hivites** (34:1-31)

A' **Journeys End:** Jacob and Isaac (35:1-29)

B. **Life of Isaac** (Genesis 25-26)

1. The birth of sons (Gen. 25:19-26)

Isaac was 40 years old when he married Rebekah (25:20-21). The text relates that she was barren (unable to conceive hearkens to Sarah, the mother of Isaac).

Isaac prays and the Lord answered; Rebekah becomes pregnant. But how much time lapsed between the initial praying and the final answer? Verse 26 notes, “Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them” (i.e. the twins).

I JOHN 5:14-15

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.”

MATTHEW 7:7-8

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.⁸ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”

2. The strife between brothers (Gen. 25:27-34)

a. Prophesied by the Lord

GENESIS 25:23

“The LORD said to her,
‘Two nations are in your womb,
and two peoples from within you will be separated;
one people will be stronger than the other,
and the older will serve the younger.’”

b. Demonstrated in birth

GENESIS 25:24-26a

“When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb.²⁵ The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau.²⁶ After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau’s heel; so he was named Jacob.”

- (1) Esau (“red” as in ruddy complexion) is born first; he is characterized as “hairy,” perhaps a clue to his animalish nature (so Waltke, 358). Esau is also a wordplay on Edom (Edomites); “hairy” sounds like “Seir,” the future homeland of Esau (32:3, 36:8).
- (2) Jacob (“he grasps the heel” or “supplanter”) plays upon Jacob’s hand at birth grasping the heel of his first-born brother. The action supports the earlier prophecy about the two (25:23) and of later actions.

c. Enacted in early life (27-34)

GENESIS 25:27-28

“The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents.²⁸ Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.”

- (1) Esau became a skillful hunter. The profession links back to Nimrod, the founder of rebellious cities (10:8-10). Later, Esau will be described as one who lives by the sword (27:40).
- (2) Jacob is a “quiet” (perhaps better, “complete,” “civilized” or “cultured”) man, comfortable with life among the tents. His brother will be a man of the “open country” while

Jacob will seek a more stable and quiet life. The two could not be more opposite.

(3) Isaac loved (showed strong preference for) Esau (physical/food reasons); Rebekah loved Jacob (perhaps influenced by the prophetic oracle that “the older will serve the younger” – 25:23).

GENESIS 25:29-31

“Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished.³⁰ He said to Jacob, “Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I’m famished!” (That is why he was also called Edom.)³¹ Jacob replied, “First sell me your birthright.”

(1) “Famished” speaks of dire hunger. His brother should not have taken advantage of his condition.

(2) Jacob exploits his brother and “sells” stew in exchange for his “birthright” (i.e., the rights of the firstborn – cf. Gen. 43:33; 49:3 and the privileged status and benefits).

Jacob valued the birthright but acted wrongly to steal it. Esau despised his birthright and foolishly exchanged it.

HEBREWS 12:16-17

“See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.¹⁷ Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done.”

◆ INSIGHT

“The cunning hunter fell into a better hunter’s trap, becoming prey to his own appetite.”

Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 449

3. The strife between Isaac and Abimelech (26:1-35)

a. Abrahamic Covenant renewal (1-6)

During a time of “famine”, Isaac may have been tempted to leave the Promised Land. The Lord appeared to him and reaffirmed the Abrahamic Covenant aspects to Isaac.

GENESIS 26:2-6

“The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, ‘Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live.³ Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham.⁴ I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed,⁵ because Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions.’⁶ So Isaac stayed in Gerar.”

(1) God promised “blessing” (3, 4).

(2) God promised “land” (2, 3, 4).

(3) God promised “descendants” (3, 4).

The Abrahamic Covenant has been confirmed to Isaac.

b. “Wife-as-sister” deception (7-11)

Like his father, Abraham, had done on two separate occasions, Isaac follows the example concerning Rebekah. This storyline is obviously out of chronological sequence, otherwise a woman with twins could not be passed off as a sister. The story shows that Isaac has inherited more than covenantal blessings, but also weaknesses as well. As in the case of his father, Isaac is found out. Abimelech is horrified that he or his men might have slept with Rebekah and incurred God’s wrath (10-11).

Striking Parallels

Abraham

1. Covenantal Promise (12:1-3)
2. Wife-sister Deception (12:10-20)
3. Quarrel with Lot’s Men (13:1-12)
4. Divine Reassurance and Sacrifice (15:1-21)
5. Treaty with Abimelech: at Beersheba (21:22-24)

Isaac

1. Covenantal Promise (26:2-6)
2. Wife-sister Deception (26:7-11)
3. Quarrel with Abimelech’s Men (26:14-22)
4. Divine Reassurance and Sacrifice (26:23-25)
5. Treaty with Abimelech: at Beersheba (26:26-33)

*Garrett quoted by Waltke, *Genesis*, 366

c. Strife with the Philistines (12-35)

(1) Isaac becomes rich due to God’s hand of blessing (12-13); his wealth incurred the bitter envy of the Philistines (14-15).

(2) Abimelech urges Isaac to leave. “You have become too powerful for us” (16).

(3) Isaac moves to the Valley of Gerar. Time after time he digs a well producing fresh water, only to encounter strife with the herdsmen of Gerar (17-22).

GENESIS 26:23-25

“From there he went up to Beersheba. ²⁴ That night the LORD appeared to him and said, ‘I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham.’ ²⁵ Isaac built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD. There he pitched his tent, and there his servants dug a well.”

- (a) Note the Covenant aspects: “bless” and “descendants.”
- (b) Note Isaac’s response: altar and worship.
- (c) “In Genesis, monuments are often made in the presence of God. Abraham and Isaac mark their encounters with the Lord by building altars (Gen. 12:8; 26:25)... altars are ‘the most visible sign of one’s devotion to the true God...’”(Ryken, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 20).
- (4) Abimelech arrives in order to secure a formal “sworn agreement” or treaty. Once accomplished, Isaac sends them away in “peace.”
- (5) The story concludes with a note about Isaac’s son, Esau.

GENESIS 26:34-35

“When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. ³⁵ They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah.”

- (a) Esau breaks custom and seeks his own wives from amongst the Canaanites.
- (b) Esau was 40 years old, even as his father, Isaac, was when Abraham sought a wife for him (25:20).
- (c) Esau’s actions betrayed his disregard for the Abrahamic Covenant vision of a special people, special descendants. The action was a “source of grief” (lit. “bitterness of spirit”) to his parents. It validates that God’s best choice of patriarchal blessing is not the eldest but the youngest.

◆ *ESAU’S WIVES*

1. Judith
2. Basemath (also called Adah)
3. Oholibamah
4. Basemath (daughter of Ishmael)

Compare Genesis 26:34 and 36:2-3; Judith not mentioned in 36:2-3 probably because she was barren without children.

Spiritual Message (Esau):

Esau serves as a good illustration of the natural man of the earth (Heb.12:16-17). In many respects a more honest man than Jacob, he was nevertheless destitute of faith. This was manifest in his despising the birthright because it was a spiritual thing, of value only as faith could see that value. The birthright involved the exercise of the priestly rights vested in the family head until the establishment of the Aaronic priesthood. The Edenic promise of one who would “bruise” Satan was fixed in the family of Abraham (Gen. 3:15); the order of promise was Abel, Seth, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Esau. As the firstborn Esau was in the distinct line of the promise to Abraham: “and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (12:3). For all that was revealed, these great messianic promises might have been realized in Esau. For a fleeting,

fleshly gratification Esau sold this birthright. Although Jacob's understanding of the birthright at the time was undoubtedly carnal and faulty, his desire for it, nevertheless, evidenced true faith. "For he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).

(Taken from *New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 373)

SESSION 4

JACOB

4

SESSION 4

JACOB

I. PRAYER

II. PANORAMA TIMELINE (Movements #2)

"Patriarchs"



III. "TOLEDOT" OUTLINE: Genesis

Creation (1:1-2:3)

1. Toledot of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4-4:26)
2. Toledot of Adam (5:1-6:8)
3. Toledot of Noah (6:9-9:29)
4. Toledot of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10:1-11:9)
5. Toledot of Shem (11:10-26)
6. Toledot of Terah (11:27-25:11)
7. Toledot of Ishmael (25:12-18)
- 8. Toledot of Isaac (25:19-35:29)**
- 9. Toledot of Esau, the father of Edom (twice) (36:1-8; 36:9-37:1)**
10. Toledot of Jacob (37:2-50:26)

IV. PATRIARCHS: Horizontal Chart

Abraham	Issac	Jacob	Joseph
12	25	25	50

V. LIFE OF JACOB: Overview (Genesis 27-36)

A. Horizontal Chart

Life of Jacob				
Theft of Blessing	Flight & Sojourn	Flight from Laban	Reunion: Esau	Settlement
27 – 28	28 – 30	31	32 – 33	33 – 35
Issac & Esau vs. Rebekah & Jacob	Dream: Bethel	Departure	Prayer	At Shechem
Esau vs. Jacob	Arrival	Pursuit	Wrestling	At Bethel
	Marriages (Children)		Meeting	Death: Rachel Sons (12)
Near Beersheba	To Paddam-Aram (Haran)	From Paddam-Aram to Gilead	Trans-Jordan Peniel to Shechem	Shechem to Bethel

B. Chiastic (Mirror) Structure

Following the theft of the blessing (27:1 – 28:9), Jacob's life can be seen as follows:

A Jacob Flees Esau (27-28)

B Angels of God Meet Jacob at Bethel (28)

C Jacob (an Exile) in Paddam-Aram (29-31)

B' Angels of God Meet Jacob at Mahanaim (32)

A' Jacob Reconciles to Esau (32-33)

(Taken from Waltke, *Genesis*, p. 386)

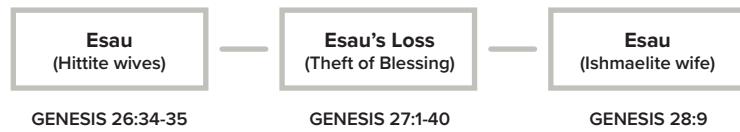
VI. LIFE OF JACOB: Exposition

A. Theft of Blessing (Gen. 27:1–28:9)

1. Introduction

- a. This event continues the strife between twin brothers. Esau had “despised” and sold his birthright (first-born son privilege) to his brother (25:29-34).
- b. Esau, though the first-born, consistently demonstrates his lack of regard for the covenantal promises (e.g. “sells” his birthright because of hunger). Jacob (and his mother, Rebekah) covet the promise, though seek to gain it by dubious means.

- c. The story of the stolen blessing is bracketed by Esau's separate procurement of wives. It forms an "inclusio" (bookend) to frame the story.



2. Exposition

GENESIS 27:1-4

"When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, 'My son.' 'Here I am,' he answered.² Isaac said, 'I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death.³ Now then, get your equipment—your quiver and bow—and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me.⁴ Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die.'"

- a. Isaac is 100 years old (cf. 25:26 and 26:34). He is blind and uncertain how long he will live (though, in fact he lives to be 180 – 35:28). His request is for "tasty food" before the formal pronouncement of blessing. Isaac's favored son, Esau, was also driven by his appetites (sold his birthright).
- b. The blindness of Isaac (common to older age) is matched by his spiritual blindness. The older was to serve the younger by prophetic declaration. Isaac attempts to circumvent by blessing the older but his blindness will contribute to blessing the younger.
- c. Isaac and Esau apparently believe that the birthright and the blessing are separate. That is not the conclusion of the inspired New Testament writer.

HEBREWS 12:16-17

"See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.¹⁷ Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done."

GENESIS 27:5

"Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back..."

- a. “She (Rebekah) is the chief actor. Her spiritual values are sound (see 25:23, 29-34; 26:35; 27:46), but her method is deplorable” (Waltke, *Genesis*, 377).
- b. This is a dysfunctional family. Rebekah urges her son, Jacob, to deceive his father. She will prepare the “tasty food” (27:6-9), “Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies” (27:10).
 - (1) Blessings in the patriarchal period were given at significant departures (cf. 24:60) or at imminent death. The blessing was binding, it could not be altered, and it had the sanction/approval of the Lord. This is seen in the forthright statement of Hebrews 11:20:

“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their futures.”

After the giving of the Mosaic Law, priests mediated the blessings to the people (cf. Num. 6:22-27).
 - (2) Rebekah’s failure is in the deception. The promise of birthright/blessing had been announced to her (25:22-23). She should have trusted God to act in a timely manner. Instead, she acts in a sinful way.

GENESIS 27:11-13

“Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, ‘But my brother Esau is a hairy man while I have smooth skin.¹² What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing.’¹³ His mother said to him, ‘My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say; go and get them for me.’”

- a. Jacob is a realist. If this ruse does not work, he will not be blessed, but rather cursed by his father. The issue of smooth skin (Jacob) and hairy (Esau) is problematic.
- b. Rebekah counters that she is willing to take the curse. Jacob must act quickly.
 - (1) Rebekah prepared the “tasty food” (27:14).
 - (2) Rebekah dressed Jacob in Esau’s clothes; she covers his smooth skin with goat’s hair. Jacob smells and feels like his brother.
- c. Jacob takes the food to his father (27:18-21).

GENESIS 27:21

“Then Isaac said to Jacob, ‘Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not.’”

- a. Blind Isaac desires to verify the identity of supposed Esau.
- b. “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau” (27:22).
 - (1) Isaac asks Jacob, “Are you really my son Esau?” (27:24).
 - (2) After Jacob lies and purports to be Esau, Isaac desires to eat, then gives his blessing.

GENESIS 27:27-29

“So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him and said, ‘Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed.²⁸ May God give you heaven’s dew and earth’s richness—an abundance of grain and new wine.²⁹ May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed.’”

- a. This blessing takes on the characteristic of an oracle. It will be binding and irrevocable.
- b. This blessing echoes Abrahamic Covenant aspects:
 - (1) Land (“field,” “earth’s richness,” “abundance”)
 - (2) Descendants (“nations,” “peoples,” “brothers”)
 - (3) Blessing (“those who bless you will be blessed” – cf. Gen. 12:3).
- c. The renewal and reaffirmation of covenantal promises will follow the lineage of Jacob.

GENESIS 27:30

“After Isaac finished blessing him, and Jacob had scarcely left his father’s presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting.”

- a. Esau returns and brings food, only to discover that an elaborate deception has taken place (27:32-35).
- b. Isaac realizes that Esau’s brother has taken the blessing that Isaac had hoped to bestow on Esau.
- c. Esau’s request to also be blessed will be given, but it is not the blessing Isaac intended. Esau laments,

GENESIS 27:36

“Esau said, ‘Isn’t he rightly named Jacob? This is the second time he has taken advantage of me: He took my birthright, and now he’s taken my blessing! Then he asked, ‘Haven’t you reserved any blessing for me?’”

GENESIS 27:39-40

“His father Isaac answered him, ‘Your dwelling will be away from the earth’s richness, away from the dew of heaven above. ⁴⁰ You will live by the sword and you will serve your brother. But when you grow restless, you will throw his yoke from off your neck.’”

- a. Esau’s dwelling place will be desolate and stark.
- b. Esau’s descendants will be warlike. They “would subsist by hunting people, just as Esau had subsisted by hunting game” (Constable, 194).

GENESIS 27:41

“Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, ‘The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.’”

- a. Esau’s planned revenge will coincide with Isaac’s soon-to-be, expected death.
- b. Rebekah urges Jacob to flee to Rebekah’s family until the anger of Esau subsides (27:42-45).

(1) GENESIS 27:46

“Then Rebekah said to Isaac, ‘I’m disgusted with living because of these Hittite women. If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land, from Hittite women like these, my life will not be worth living.’”

(2) Isaac blesses Jacob, commands him not to marry a Canaanite woman, and sends him north to the family of Rebekah (Bethuel, her father; Laban, her brother) (28:1-2).

GENESIS 28:3-4

“May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples. ⁴ May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now reside as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham.”

- a. Note the Abrahamic Covenant implications: blessings, descendants, land.
- b. Note the response of Esau: marry Ishmaelite wives. This completes the “inclusio” (see earlier chart, p. 64). Esau has despised his birthright, lost his preferred blessing, married foreign women, married again an Abrahamic descendant by Ishmael. He is “a marginalized family member who deeply wanted to belong” (Waltke quoting Roop, *Genesis*, 383). He is the man of flesh who has been the rejected son who marries into the family of the discarded Ishmael.

B. Flight and Sojourn (Gen. 28:10 – 30:24)

1. Dream at Bethel (28:10-22)

GENESIS 28:10-15

“Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran.¹¹ When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep.¹² He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.¹³ There above it stood the LORD, and he said: ‘I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying.¹⁴ Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.¹⁵ I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.’”

- a. This event marks God’s first revelation to Jacob. It is also the first of two significant, life-changing encounters which occur at night (Bethel in Gen. 28; Peniel in Gen. 32). God takes the initiative. There is no scheming by Jacob.
- b. Harran (or Haran) lies far north of Beersheba in the land of Paddam-Aram (Northwest Mesopotamia). Bethel is about 45 miles due north of Beersheba. In effect Jacob is retracing back to Haran the very path that his grandfather, Abraham, followed when leaving Ur to journey to Haran and then to Bethel.
- c. “Stairway” (or ladder, but better, stairs) connects the abode of God (heaven) with the abode of man (earth). Ross (quoted by Matthews, 442) sees “how a place became a shrine, a stone became an altar, and a fugitive became a pilgrim – God in His grace revealed Himself to Jacob in that place.” The stairway speaks of divine mediation and presence.
- d. God reveals Himself as “the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac” (28:13). Following the personal identification, the aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant are reaffirmed to Jacob.
 - (1) “Land” (13)
 - (2) “Descendants” (14)
 - (3) “Blessed” or Blessing (14)

NEW TESTAMENT INSIGHT

JOHN 1:51

“He then added, ‘Very truly I tell you, you will see “heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on” the Son of Man.’”

JOHN 14:6

“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

I TIMOTHY 2:5

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,”

- e. God's promise to Jacob (28:15) included these elements:

- (1) "I am with you" God's presence
- (2) "I will watch over you" God's protection
- (3) "I will bring you back to this land" God's promise
- (4) "I will not leave you" God's faithfulness

GENESIS 28:16-17

"When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, 'Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.' ¹⁷ He was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.'"

- a. This is the beginning of the turning point in Jacob's life. His faith is weak, but the dream awakened in him a personal awareness of God's guidance. His fear may have been occasioned by a sense of sin or guilt (conduct of previous deception).
- b. Bethel means "house" (Hb. Beth) of "God" (Hb. El); this is a seemingly insignificant place that is revealed as the place where God is. "Gate of heaven" speaks again of the dream's meaning; it assures Jacob of God's presence and nearness.
- c. If God would fulfill His promise, Jacob vowed to return and (1) the Lord will be his God, (2) the stone/pillar will be the beginning of a sanctuary/shrine, (3) he will give the Lord one tenth of the blessings that God might give him.

2. Arrival at Paddam-Aram (29:1-14a)

GENESIS 29:1

"Then Jacob continued on his journey and came to the land of the eastern peoples."

Jacob arrives in an unfamiliar place; the narrator simply calls it "the land of the eastern peoples." The story line builds to a sense of uncertainty. What will happen next?

a. Jacob with the shepherds (1-8)

Jacob spies a well with sheep nearby. The scene reminds the reader of a similar setting when Abraham's servant sought a wife for Isaac from Abraham's relatives (Gen. 24).

Jacob inquires and discovers the shepherds are from Haran (29:4) and, indeed, know Laban. They point out that Laban's daughter, Rachel, was just then arriving (29:6). This is a providential "defining moment."

◆ INSIGHT

Babylon was understood by the Semitic people as meaning "gate of God." Here, Jacob names this significant place, Bethel, or "house of God." This may be an intentional counterpoint.

◆ INSIGHT

The preferred vows "should not be construed as cheap bargaining but rather as a vow of gratitude."

(Vos, *Genesis*, 110)

b. Jacob with Rachel (9-12)

GENESIS 29:10-11

"When Jacob saw Rachel daughter of his uncle Laban, and Laban's sheep, he went over and rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well and watered his uncle's sheep.¹¹ Then Jacob kissed Rachel and began to weep aloud."

- (1) Jacob is overcome with emotion. His long journey of some 400 miles has successfully come to an end. He has reached his relatives of the Haran region.
- (2) Jacob rolls the large stone away, one of such size that it normally took several to do so (29:3,8). Jewish tradition accords Jacob the status of giant, a man of unusual strength. After watering the sheep of his uncle, he kisses Rachel, informs her of his identity, and weeps at his good fortune.
- (3) "So she ran and told her father" (29:12).

c. Jacob with Laban (13-14a)

GENESIS 29:13-14a

"As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister's son, he hurried to meet him. He embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his home, and there Jacob told him all these things.¹⁴ Then Laban said to him, 'You are my own flesh and blood.'

- (1) Laban's kiss was customary between family members; as the story continues, this initial kiss will not prepare Jacob for the future mistreatment by his uncle. It is as empty as Jacob's kiss of deception for his father (27:27).
- (2) What is Laban thinking? Could it be that such a hearty welcome (hurried, embraced, kissed, brought home) was conditioned upon the memory of the last distant visitor (Abraham's servant) who brought lavish gifts for Rebekah?
- (3) Jacob recounted "all these things," probably a reference to his encounter at Bethel. This would frame the meeting as a part of God's guidance (even as Abraham's servant had also suggested).
- (4) Laban's response was a recognition of Jacob as his own kinsman. But this relationship will not prevent Laban from taking advantage of Jacob (as the unfolding story will clearly show).

3. Marriages to Leah and Rachel (29:14b-30)

a. Agreement with Laban (14b-20)

GENESIS 29:14b-18

"After Jacob had stayed with him for a whole month,¹⁵ Laban said to him, 'Just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be.'¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.¹⁷ Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel had a lovely figure and was beautiful.¹⁸ Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, 'I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel.'"

- (1) After a month, Laban broaches the question of payment for Jacob's work in the family enterprise. As will be demonstrated later in the story, Laban intends to exploit the situation. Jacob's response was seven years of labor for Laban in return for marriage to the younger daughter, Rachel.
- (2) The older sister, Leah, is described as having "weak eyes" (17). This may have been an allusion to the fact that her eyes were dull and lacking in luster, not bright-eyed so treasured by ancient near-eastern culture. Or, as some suggest, she had poor vision. Rachel, on the other hand, was pictured as "lovely in form and beautiful." On the surface there is no comparison. Not surprisingly, Jacob suggests the seven years of labor for Rachel.
- (3) Laban agrees to the bargain (in public and with words); Jacob faithfully served seven years for beautiful Rachel. The text is silent as to Rachel or Leah's interest in Jacob. Later, the sisters will vent their emotions toward their father (31:14-16), but nothing else is recorded. Jacob has bargained in good faith. He, "the deceiver" of father and brother, may have met his match in his Uncle Laban.

b. Deception by Laban (21-30)

GENESIS 29:21-22

"Then Jacob said to Laban, 'Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to make love to her.'²² So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast."

- (1) "Wife" speaks of the binding betrothal (cf. Deut. 22:23-24; Matt 1:18-19).
- (2) "Feast" would have been a part of the marriage celebration, though the word implies a drinking feast. This may have contributed to Jacob's mistaking of Leah for Rachel. Add the custom of the bride being veiled and the darkness of the tent and it is plausible that the deceptive plan worked without Jacob knowing.
- (3) The deception and complications of this event are captured in chiastic structure (Ross, 498).

- A Jacob's payment for his wife (20)
- B Consummation of marriage to Leah by deception (21-24)
- C Jacob's accusation against Laban (25)
- C' Laban's defense to Jacob (26)
- B' Consummation of the marriage to Rachel by negotiation (27-30a)
- A' Jacob's payment for his wife (30b)

GENESIS 29:30

“Jacob made love to Rachel also, and his love for Rachel was greater than his love for Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years.”

- (1) Jacob immediately receives Rachel for his wife though he must now labor seven more years for Laban.
- (2) Jacob “loved Rachel more than Leah.” This fact will cause much tension in the household (29:31, “Leah was not loved” and 30:1, the jealousy of Rachel over Leah’s children).
- (3) Laban has shamelessly used his older daughter, intentionally “hidden” the custom of marrying the older first, and deceived Jacob at every turn. Laban has “blinded” Jacob to get what he wants; Jacob’s mother “blinded” Isaac (by deception) to get what she wanted. This lengthy sojourn among his relatives (and particularly the deceptive Laban) will begin the process of slowly strengthening Jacob’s faith (keeping his word, working hard, no immediate retaliation).
- (4) Laban, however, is pictured as “cunning, deceptive, heartless, greedy and ambitious”. (Waltke, *Genesis*, 404)

GALATIANS 6:7

“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.”

4. Children of Jacob (29:31-30:24)

The story of the married life of Jacob with two wives is complicated by the birth of children to Leah, the barrenness of Rachel and the giving of handmaidens to produce more children. Finally, even Rachel bears a son.

GENESIS 30:22-24

“Then God remembered Rachel; he listened to her and enabled her to conceive.²³ She became pregnant and gave birth to a son and said, ‘God has taken away my disgrace.’²⁴ She named him Joseph, and said, ‘May the LORD add to me another son.’”

- a. Rachel is a daughter of the covenant, though she will not bear the son through whom the “seed of the woman” covenantal promise will come.
- b. Joseph is her only son and will be treated in a special way (37:3-4). Her prayer for another son will be granted, though it will cost her life (35:16-18).
- c. Note the following listing of sons (and one daughter) that will eventually be born to Jacob.

◆ INSIGHT

“God chose the despised mother, Leah, and exalted her to be the first mother. The kingly tribe of Judah and the priestly tribe of Levi trace back to her, in spite of Jacob’s love for Rachel and her son Joseph.”

(Ross, “Genesis” (BKC), 77)

Twelve Tribes (Sons) of Israel

Leah	Bilhah	Zilpah	Rachel
#1 Reuben			
#2 Simeon			
#3 Levi			
#4 Judah			
	#5 Dan		
	#6 Naphtali		
		#7 Gad	
#9 Issachar		#8 Asher	
#10 Zebulun (Dinah)			
			#11 Joseph
			#12 Benjamin

- d. The unfolding story will show the bypassing of Leah’s first three sons as the “seed of the woman” fulfillment (Gen. 3:15). Judah will eventually take that role.

C. Flight from Laban (30:25-31:55)

1. The departure from Laban (30:25-31:21)

- a. Jacob’s intention to leave (30:25-28)

GENESIS 30:25-28

“After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, ‘Send me on my way so I can go back to my own homeland.²⁶ Give me my wives and children, for whom I have served you, and I will be on my way. You know how much work I’ve done for

you.”²⁷ But Laban said to him, ‘If I have found favor in your eyes, please stay. I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you.’²⁸ He added, ‘Name your wages, and I will pay them.’

- (1) The previous narrative has demonstrated how God had provided “descendants” per Abraham’s Covenant promise. This part of the story will show how Jacob will be “blessed” (made wealthy).
- (2) Jacob is ready to return to his true home. (Later to his wives he will report on a dream he had – 31:10-13.) He has labored 14 years for his wives; he will labor 6 more for his wealth (flocks), a total of 20 years in Paddam-Aram (31:38). He still requires the consent of the patriarch to leave the household.
- (3) Deceptive Laban is not prepared to send Jacob and his clan away with the expected, generous supply of gifts. Jacob is nothing more than an indentured servant in the eyes of Laban.

DEUTERONOMY 15:12-14

“If any of your people—Hebrew men or women—sell themselves to you and serve you six years, in the seventh year you must let them go free.¹³ And when you release them, do not send them away empty-handed.¹⁴ Supply them liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give to them as the LORD your God has blessed you.”

Laban counters by inviting Jacob to name his wages (cf. 29:15 where Laban spoke the same at the beginning of their relationship—one marred by deceit).

- b. Jacob’s agreement to stay (30:29-43)

GENESIS 30:29-30

“Jacob said to him, ‘You know how I have worked for you and how your livestock has fared under my care.³⁰ The little you had before I came has increased greatly, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I have been. But now, when may I do something for my own household?’”

- (1) Jacob acknowledges and declares to Laban that the Lord is the one who has brought blessing to Laban. Yet, while Laban prospers, Jacob has nothing of his own.
- (2) Two men, both practitioners of deception, began to bargain. Jacob has a dream (31:10-13) to guide him. Laban has his devious bargaining. Jacob asks for the abnormally colored sheep, normally but a small percentage of the expected coloration of the flock. Greedy Laban readily

agrees. “Whoever digs a hole and scoops it out falls into the pit they have made.” (Ps. 7:15).

- (3) God sovereignly blesses Jacob. His personal schemes to increase streaked or spotted sheep are not the cause of the phenomenon. His dream (31:10-12) reinforced God’s hand of protection and blessing upon him.

c. Jacob’s resolve to leave (31:1-21)

- (1) Spurred on by Laban’s sons (1-3)

GENESIS 31:1-3

“Jacob heard that Laban’s sons were saying, ‘Jacob has taken everything our father owned and has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father.’² And Jacob noticed that Laban’s attitude toward him was not what it had been.³ Then the LORD said to Jacob, ‘Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you.’”

- (2) Spurred on by explanations to his wives (4-13)
- (3) Spurred on by his wives’ support (14-21)

GENESIS 31:14-16

“Then Rachel and Leah replied, ‘Do we still have any share in the inheritance of our father’s estate?¹⁵ Does he not regard us as foreigners? Not only has he sold us, but he has used up what was paid for us.¹⁶ Surely all the wealth that God took away from our father belongs to us and our children. So do whatever God has told you.’”

- (a) Rachel and Leah are obviously angry with their father’s treatment; as he has cheated Jacob, he in effect has cheated them.
- (b) Rachel and Leah acknowledge God’s hand in the decision to leave.
- (c) Rachel steals her father’s “household gods” (31:19), supposedly useful for protection and blessing. Her motive in doing so is uncertain: spite or personal gain or evidence of legitimate heirship? The text is unclear.

2. The pursuit of Laban (31:22-55)

GENESIS 31:22-24

“On the third day Laban was told that Jacob had fled.²³ Taking his relatives with him, he pursued Jacob for seven days and caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead.²⁴ Then God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream at night and said to him, ‘Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.’”

- (1) Jacob now flees “to” the very place twenty years earlier he fled “from.”
- (2) Laban pursued for seven days bringing his “relatives,” that is the clan prepared for military-style conflict. Yet God speaks to him in a dream to curtail impulsive actions (or words).
- (3) When Laban’s party catches up to Jacob’s, Laban twice asks “Why did you deceive me so?” (31:25-30). Portraying himself as the offended party, he does not realize (or choose to acknowledge) that he has consistently deceived or cheated Jacob, that his daughters are not hostages but supportive of the flight and that Jacob is well within his moral right to leave.
- (4) Laban also poses the question of his “stolen gods.” The text affirms Jacob’s lack of knowledge that Rachel had stolen the gods (31:30-32). After a fruitless search, Jacob responds.

GENESIS 31:36-37

“Jacob was angry and took Laban to task. ‘What is my crime?’ he asked Laban. ‘How have I wronged you that you hunt me down? ³⁷ Now that you have searched through all my goods, what have you found that belongs to your household? Put it here in front of your relatives and mine, and let them judge between the two of us.’”

- (a) Twenty years of repressed frustration breaks forth in angry rebuttal (cf. 31:38-42).
- (b) Jacob demands the proof of his thievery; his reputation is at stake, both in Haran and in the tense encounter.
- (5) Laban, having no proof of Jacob’s guilt in anything, proposes a parity covenant (31:43-45).
 - (a) Laban in effect concedes that he has lost his lawsuit-challenge.
 - (b) A pillar will mark the ratification of the agreement (31:45-47).
 - (c) This covenant is not an amicable agreement among friends but rather the reluctant agreement among antagonists with warnings implied (31:48-55).

GENESIS 31:55

“Early the next morning Laban kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then he left and returned home.”

D. Reunion with Esau (32:1-33:17)

An individual like Jacob can try to run from his past, but often a day of reckoning must come. Jacob needs two things:

- (1) An assurance of God's presence and favor with him (present time forward);
- (2) An ability to face the uncertainty of a dreaded reunion with an angered brother (past grievances). Both will require brokenness.

GENESIS 32:1-2

"Jacob also went on his way, and the angels of God met him.² When Jacob saw them, he said, 'This is the camp of God!' So he named that place Mahanaim."

- This is the second of three encounters that Jacob has with angels (Bethel – 28:19; Mahanaim – 32:2; Peniel – 32:30). The first prepares him to meet Laban; the second prepares him to meet Esau. Their presence lends a protective note to an uncertain future. But their presence is not benign. Jacob must have a life-change experience; his faith in God must be based not simply upon heredity, but personal experiential faith.
- "Mahanaim" means two camps. "The narrator (author) employs the number two throughout the scene: two camps, two families, two meetings—one with God and Esau—and two brothers" (Waltke, *Genesis*, 441).

1. Prayer (32:3-21)

GENESIS 32:3-5

"Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.⁴ He instructed them: 'This is what you are to say to my lord Esau: 'Your servant Jacob says, I have been staying with Laban and have remained there till now.⁵ I have cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats, male and female servants. Now I am sending this message to my lord, that I may find favor in your eyes.'"

- a. Prudently Jacob sends messengers to his brother, Esau, in the land of Seir (Esau has either displaced or is close to displacing the former inhabitants; the fact indicates a measure of his military strength).
- b. In the carefully worded message, Jacob refers to himself as "your servant" and addresses his brother as "master." The arrogance of Jacob's past must be righted. Jacob's future must lie in God's hand, not in Esau's forfeited birthright or blessing.

GENESIS 32:6

“When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, ‘We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.’”

- a. Will this reunion be for war or for a royal reception? Jacob does not appear to know.
- b. Jacob’s emotional response is “great fear and distress.” He divides his company into two groups, clearly showing that he was preparing for a less than friendly reunion. Jacob has no fighting men; all he has is the protection of God.

PSALM 34:7

“The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.”

GENESIS 32:9a

“Then Jacob prayed...”

- a. This is Jacob’s first recorded prayer (not to be confused with his vow of 28:20-22).
- b. This prayer is evidence of the growing faith of the patriarch. Only a right relationship with God can prepare him to restore a right relationship with his brother.
- c. The prayer resembles the later “penitential” prayers in the Book of Psalms. It provides a guide for such praying; note the chart (taken from Cupp, “Panorama,” 40).
- d. After the prayer Jacob spent the night. The next day he sent gifts in more than three parties (32:19) to his brother. This appears to be a diplomatic way of softening what may be a hard-hearted, brother-adversary.

GENESIS 32:19-21

“He also instructed the second, the third and all the others who followed the herds: ‘You are to say the same thing to Esau when you meet him.²⁰ And be sure to say, “Your servant Jacob is coming behind us.” For he thought, ‘I will pacify him with these gifts I am sending on ahead; later, when I see him, perhaps he will receive me.’²¹ So Jacob’s gifts went on ahead of him, but he himself spent the night in the camp.’”

2. Wrestling (32:22-32)

GENESIS 32:22-24

“That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.²³ After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions.²⁴ So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak.”

Jacob's Model Prayer

Text: **Genesis 32**

Context: **Esau's coming with 400 men to meet Jacob/his clan**
(years after Jacob has deceived/stolen Esau's birthright)

Components	Scripture
1 Who God Is	"O God of my father Abraham... Issac, O LORD who said to me..." (32:9)
2 Who I Am	"I am unworthy" (32:10)
3 What I Need	"Save me..." (32:11)
4 What I Feel	"... for I am afraid he will come and attack me... mothers with their children..." (32:11)
5 What You Said	"... I will surely make you prosper..." (32:12)

- a. Jacob stays at the rear with his immediate family; after sending them across the Jabbok stream with all his possessions, the Biblical text notes, "So Jacob was left alone." This aloneness is significant.
- b. In this night-time testing, Jacob has nothing to protect him, no one to protect him. For the complete life-change to occur, Jacob must face "the man" alone (pre-incarnate Christ? cf. Hos. 12:4-5).
- c. By touching the hip socket the Divine Wrestler rendered Jacob incapable of physical wrestling or pivoting strength (32:25). Defeated physically, Jacob continues to "wrestle in prayer" pleading for God to bless him (prevailing prayer).
- d. Jacob ("deceiver") now becomes Israel ("striver" or "prevailer"). It marks a change in the man, not full or complete, but a new direction by a new man.

GENESIS 32:30-31

"So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, 'It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.'³¹ The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip."

3. Meeting (with Esau) (33:1-17)

GENESIS 33:1-3

"Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two female servants.² He put the female servants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear.³ He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother."

◆ **INSIGHT**

"Jacob must encounter God alone, without possessions or protection."

(Waltke, 445)

◆ **INSIGHT**

"Though the wrestling was physical, it symbolized a spiritual struggle between Jacob and God to determine whether Jacob, in self-will and self-reliance and guile, was able to manage his own affairs or whether he was to bow completely to God's management of his life."

(Vos, *Genesis*, 125).

- a. Note the arrangement of wives and maidservants. Jacob holds the most beloved closest to him.
- b. Jacob's prostration shows the submissiveness of an inferior before a superior. It was a customary royal symbol of a vassal before his king or patron.

GENESIS 33:4

"But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept."

- a. Esau "ran;" at best, Jacob limped to meet his brother.
- b. The verbs are telling: "ran"..." "embraced"..." "threw"..." "kissed"..." "wept." This sequence speaks of deep, filial solidarity. Jacob is a new man; Esau's heart of revenge has also melted; his forgiveness of his brother is complete.
- c. Esau appears reluctant to accept his brother's gifts (33:9) but by the reception of the extravagant gifts, it would indicate Esau's satisfaction that the previous wrongs had been covered and accepted. The 400 men of Esau along with Jacob's family attested to the reconciliation.
- d. Esau offers to travel slowly back to Seir (the home of Esau) but Jacob politely declines (33:12-14). While he does not say so directly, Jacob plans to settle elsewhere (first, Succoth, then later to Shechem). This may be timid caution or a recognition that together the land could not sustain them both (cf. 36:6-7). Whatever the unstated reasons may have been, Jacob is soon to cross the Jordan to the Promised Land.

E. Settlement in the Land (33:18-35:29)

1. First settlement (33:18-20)

GENESIS 33:18

"After Jacob came from Paddan Aram, he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan and camped within sight of the city."

- a. Jacob has moved from Paddan-Aram (Northwest Asia Minor) to Succoth (briefly near the Jabbok River) to Shechem where he purchases land (permanency).
- b. Shechem places Jacob in the footsteps of his grandfather, Abraham. He is in the land promised by Abrahamic Covenant stipulations. Here also, though unstated, he will build a well that will be functional in the days of Jesus (cf. Jn. 4:5-6).
- c. Note also that Jacob sets "up an altar" for sacrifice and as a memorial. He calls it El Elohe Israel ("God, the God of Israel").

2. Interlude: Dinah's tragedy (34:1-3)

Jacob's return should have led him to Bethel (cf. 28:20-22) but the commercial lure of Shechem as a trading city may have slowed his earlier resolve.

After ten years or so of life in Shechem, the story takes a sordid, horrifying turn. Dinah, the daughter of Jacob by Leah, was raped ("violated") by a prince of the Hivites who further wanted to marry her (34:1-4). Jacob did not respond immediately; his passivity and lack of emotion contrasts sharply with Dinah's brothers (34:5, 7).

Shechem (the rapist) demands that his father (Hamor) arrange the marriage. The brothers of Dinah deceitfully resist by noting that in order to intermarry, the men of the city would need to be circumcised (34:13-17). Agreeing to do so led to the murder and plunder of the city as revenge enacted by the brothers (Simeon and Levi) (34:24-25).

Jacob's emotional outburst was not about his daughter's defilement (still being held in the house of Hamor and in Shechem) but over possible retaliation or loss of prestige among neighboring peoples (34:30). The brothers have avenged a moral outrage with one of their own. Their consequence for such rash action will be felt in Jacob's final blessings on his sons (49:5-7).

3. Second settlement (35:1-15)

a. To Bethel (1-15)

GENESIS 35:1

"Then God said to Jacob, 'Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau.'"

- (1) God commands Jacob to fulfill his earlier vow (28:20-22) and return to Bethel. The time spent in Shechem has not developed and matured the family clan. It has led to rape, murder, deception, plunder.
- (2) God commands that an altar be built.

GENESIS 35:2-4

"So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, 'Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes.³ Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone.'⁴ So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem."

Jacob commands his family:

- (1) "Get rid of the foreign gods".....Rededication
- (2) "Purify yourselves".....Consecration
- (3) "Change your clothes".....Purification

GENESIS 35:11-13

"And God said to him, 'I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants.¹² The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you.'¹³ Then God went up from him at the place where he had talked with him."

Note the Abrahamic Covenant aspects:

- (1) "Nations" ... "Kings" ... "Descendants"
- (2) "Land"
- (3) "Blessing" (implied)

b. Deaths (16-22)

- (1) Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin (16-20).
- (2) Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, dies near Bethel (35:8).
- (3) Sons of Israel (23-26)

• See the chart, p. 73 for the listing.

VII. **"TOLEDOT" OF ESAU** (Genesis 36)

A. **Outline of Genesis**

1. This is the ninth "toledot" comprising the Book of Genesis (counting the two "toledots" of Esau in Gen. 36 as one).
2. Esau (son of Isaac) and Ishmael (son of Abraham) were not of the elect line, the "seed of the woman" (Gen. 3:15). They were, however, promised blessing (Gen. 17:20; 27:38-40). In the composition of Genesis, their genealogies follow the death of their fathers.

B. Overview (Genesis 36)

The chapter outlines in two genealogical lists the blessings and prosperity of Esau in the land of Seir. God had promised Abraham that his son, Ishmael, would be a great nation. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that a like promise was made to Isaac's other son, Esau. Genesis 36 and the impressive genealogical lists demonstrate this strength and growth into a powerful people/nation.

◆ INSIGHT

"In spite of Esau's unbelief, his descendants have a future. Under God they too have a story (cf. Deut. 23:7: 'Do not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother')."

(Waltke, 489)

SESSION 5

JOSEPH

SESSION 5

JOSEPH

I. PRAYER

II. PANORAMA TIMELINE (Movements #2)

"Patriarchs"



III. "TOLEDOT" OUTLINE: Genesis

Creation (1:1-2:3)

1. Toledot of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4-4:26)
2. Toledot of Adam (5:1-6:8)
3. Toledot of Noah (6:9-9:29)
4. Toledot of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10:1-11:9)
5. Toledot of Shem (11:10-26)
6. Toledot of Terah (11:27-25:11)
7. Toledot of Ishmael (25:12-18)
8. Toledot of Isaac (25:19-35:29)
9. Toledot of Esau, the father of Edom (twice) (36:1-8; 36:9-37:1)
- 10. Toledot of Jacob (37:2-50:26)**

IV. PATRIARCHS

Abraham	Issac	Jacob	Joseph
12	25	25	36

V. LIFE OF JOSEPH: (Genesis 37-50)

Joseph

Youthful Arrogance	Rise to Prominence	Family Reunion	Final Days of Jacob
<p>... Dreams</p> <p>... Sold to slavery to Midianites to Potiphar</p>	<p>... Potiphar's house to</p> <p>... Pharaoh's prison to</p> <p>... Pharaoh's favor</p>	<p>... 1st Journey</p> <p>... 2nd Journey</p> <p>... Joseph's test and revelation</p>	<p>... Jacob to Egypt</p> <p>... Blessing of Joseph's son's</p> <p>... Blessing of Jacob's sons</p> <p>... Death of Jacob</p>

VI. **LIFE OF JOSEPH:** Exposition

The life of Joseph is prominent in the 10th “toledot” of Genesis. But this section of Genesis focuses also on the conflicts and the transformations of the sons of Jacob. “The emphasis now shifts from Jacob’s personal struggles to receive the blessing promised to Abraham and Isaac, to the events in Jacob’s life that lead up to the formation of Israel as a nation” (Aalders quoted by Constable, 228). The sovereignty of God and the choices of human responsibility highlight much of the story.

A. **Youthful Arrogance** (Gen. 37-38)

GENESIS 37:2b-4

“Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him.⁴ When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.”

- Joseph at 17 years tends the family flocks. He works closely with his brothers (born of the handmaidens, Bilhah and Zilpah).

- Joseph is hated (resented) by his brothers:

- (1) He gave his father a “bad report” about the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah;
- (2) He was the favored, more-loved son of Jacob;
- (3) He received preferential treatment (ornamental robe).

- The household of Jacob has previously been demonstrated as a dysfunctional clan. Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah and Joseph more than his brothers. Simeon and Levi have enacted murderous revenge (Gen. 34), Reuben has slept with his father’s concubine (Bilhah) which, according to the custom of the day, was an act of seizing his father’s role of leadership. The family is in desperate need of significant life-change.

1. Dreams (37:5-11)

GENESIS 37:5-8

“Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more.⁶ He said to them, ‘Listen to this dream I had:⁷ We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it.’⁸ His brothers said to him, ‘Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?’ And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.”

- a. Dreams were a common, ancient means by which divine communication and prediction could be given. This is the first dream in the Bible whereby God does not speak.
- b. The agricultural dream clearly sees the older brothers subservient to the younger, Joseph. Note that this dream predicts a later time when the brothers would come before Joseph for grain/bread (in Egypt – 42:1-6).
- c. The dream increases the brothers' resentment. They clearly see the implication... “reign over us” and “rule us.”

Joseph's second and confirmatory dream (37:9-11) envisioned the sun, moon and eleven stars bowing down before him. The implication was clear to all: Joseph sees the entire family bowing to his authority. The brothers were “jealous” (see Rachel's jealousy in 30:1); Jacob pondered the matter.

INSIGHT

“Joseph is depicted as morally good but immature and bratty. His tattling, and robe parading inflames his brothers' hatred against him.”
(Waltke, *Genesis*, 498)

2. Sold to slavery (37:12-36)

The entire narrative is one of deceit, a deeply ingrained family trait. The selling of Joseph is covered by lying to the patriarchal father; Reuben attempts to deceive his brothers in order to save Joseph's life.

a. Near Shechem (12-17a)

The brothers minus Joseph are shepherding near Shechem (the site of the rape of Dinah and bloody aftermath some two years previous – Gen. 34). Jacob sends Joseph to check on the welfare of the brothers and the flocks. Providentially Joseph meets a man who knows that the group has moved the herd to Dothan, about 13 miles northwest of Shechem.

b. At Dothan (17b-20)

GENESIS 37:17b-20)

“So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. ¹⁸ But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.¹⁹ ‘Here comes that dreamer!’ they said to each other. ²⁰ ‘Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams.’”

- (1) The plot to kill Joseph begins upon seeing the “dreamer” in his privileged coat.
- (2) The bitterness of the brothers has become murderous. Envy appears to reign within their resentment.

PROVERBS 14:30

“A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.”

PROVERBS 27:4

“Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?”

JAMES 3:16

“For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.”

- (3) Reuben (the firstborn, the rash usurper of his father's leadership—recall the Bilhah affair – 35:22)—pleads for his brother's life. He as the firstborn takes the role of his father in his absence. His plan is to deceive the brothers and later retrieve his younger brother to take him safely home (37:21-22).
- (4) Ishmaelite traders (also called Midianite) provide not only a solution to getting rid of the troublesome brother, but also a profit as Judah suggests, “Come, let's sell him...” (37:25-27).
- (5) The sale is completed; the robe of Joseph is torn and dipped in goat's blood. The brothers are prepared to take it as a ruse to father Jacob. Deceit upon deceit continues.

c. Back to Hebron (32-36)

The brothers return to Hebron with the bloodied ornamental robe.

GENESIS 37:34-35

“Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days.³⁵ All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. ‘No,’ he said, ‘I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave.’ So his father wept for him.”

- (1) Jacob had earlier deceived his father by impersonation with goatskins. Now, he will be the object of deception by goat's blood and a robe.
- (2) Jacob's grief is profound:
 - (a) “tore his clothes”
 - (b) “put on sackcloth”
 - (c) “mourned...many days”
- (3) Hypocritically, Jacob's sons attempt to comfort him to no avail.
- (4) Meanwhile, the Midianite traders have sold Joseph to Potiphar, the “captain of the guard,” an official of Pharaoh in Egypt.

3. Judah and Tamar Story (Gen. 38)

The Biblical narrator has sent Joseph to Egypt by Midianite traders. Joseph has been purchased by a high official of Pharaoh's court (37:36). Now, the author-compiler of Genesis relates a story of a different son of Jacob, that is, Judah (the fourth son of Jacob by Leah). Recall that this is the "toledot" of Jacob and while Joseph is a key player, other sons' stories will also be narrated. The family is fractured and dysfunctional and in great need of familial love and mature faith.

a. Early in the story (about 20 years' duration) (38:1-11)

GENESIS 38:1

"At that time, Judah left his brothers and went down to stay with a man of Adullam named Hirah."

- (1) Judah marries a Canaanite woman (unnamed). Jacob's influence over his sons' marriages is far less than grandfather Abraham or father Isaac. These fathers had feared the destructive influence of the Canaanites. Jacob has less and less control over the fractured family.
- (2) Judah has three sons: Er, Onan, Shelah (38:3-5). Er and Onan are described as "wicked in the Lord's sight" and are put to death by the Lord. This is the first explicit account that attributes death to the Lord's hand of discipline.
- (3) Er had grown up, married Tamar, but had no children at the time of Er's death (by the hand of the Lord).

GENESIS 38:8

"Then Judah said to Onan, 'Sleep with your brother's wife and fulfill your duty to her as a brother-in-law to raise up offspring for your brother.'"

- (1) This Near Eastern custom was later incorporated into Biblical law and practice. It continued even to the time of Jesus (Mk. 12:18-25).

DEUTERONOMY 25:5-6

"If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her.⁶ The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel."

RUTH 4:5, 10, 17

"Then Boaz said, 'On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with

his property.' ... I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his hometown. Today you are witnesses!' ...The women living there said, 'Naomi has a son!' And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David."

- (2) Onan was willing to lie with his brother's widow (Tamar) but not to produce offspring for her inheritance. By deceptively refusing to do so he would gain one-half of his father's inheritance (rather than one-third). As a result he was judged wicked and put to death also by the Lord.
- (3) Shelah, the third son of Judah, would be next in line to perform the duty of producing offspring for Tamar. Judah urges Tamar to live as a widow in her father's house until Shelah grows up (38:11). This is a deception; Judah has no intentions in arranging this at a later date.

b. After a long time (38:12-30)

The phrase "after a long time" provides a time marker for the conclusion to the Judah/Tamar story. The wife of Judah dies (38:12). Tamar recognizes that Judah has no intentions of providing a son for her by his son, Shelah, or by his own body (later Hittite and Middle Assyrian laws permitted the father to bear offspring for the widow if a son was not available). She takes off her widow's clothes and dresses as a common prostitute to attract Judah's interest.

GENESIS 38:15-16a

"When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. ¹⁶ Not realizing that she was his daughter-in-law, he went over to her by the roadside and said, 'Come now, let me sleep with you.'"

- (1) Tamar has refused to remarry a Canaanite. She is faithful to her dead husband's inheritance rights and is determined to have children in the place of Er (firstborn of Judah).
- (2) Judah has been a deceptive father-in-law. He has not given his third son (Shelah) to Tamar to produce an offspring. Seeing the "prostitute," he acts to fulfill his own lust and bargains with the veiled Tamar.
- (3) Tamar shrewdly requests a pledge of future payment. She asks for Judah's "seal and its cord, and the staff in your hand" (38:18). Judah sleeps with Tamar and Tamar becomes pregnant.

"After she left, she took off her veil and put on her widow's clothes again" (38:19).

GENESIS 38:20

“Meanwhile Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite in order to get his pledge back from the woman, but he did not find her.”

- (1) Judah sends the payment of a young goat to the supposed prostitute but she cannot be found. The goat is taken by a friend; Judah may be too embarrassed to do the deed himself.
- (2) Others consulted do not know or recall a “shrine prostitute” beside the road at Enaim. When told, Judah is in a predicament. “Judah is like a reputable gentleman who unwittingly ‘loses’ his credit card in a brothel” (Waltke, *Genesis*, 513).

c. About three months later

GENESIS 38:24

“About three months later Judah was told, ‘Your daughter-in-law Tamar is guilty of prostitution, and as a result she is now pregnant.’”

- (1) Judah’s true colors and lack of concern for his daughter-in-law are uncovered. Tamar’s supposed crime of “prostitution” carries a death penalty, one Judah is eager to enforce.
- (2) Tamar sends the “seal and cord and staff” to her father-in-law with the message: “I am pregnant by the man who owns these” (38:25).
- (3) Judah owns up to his sin (lit. “she is righteous, not I”). Tamar has fought for her late husband’s rights.
- (4) Twins are born to Tamar and are named Perez and Zerah. During the birth Zerah’s hand reaches out and is pronounced the first-born by tying a scarlet thread to his hand. However, he drew his hand back in and Perez was born followed by Zerah. Once again in patriarchal history there is the birth/struggle of twins (cf. 25:23).
- (5) Perez (technically the younger) will receive the rights and blessings of the first-born. Perez will be the descendant in the lineage of Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:3; Lk. 3:33).

B. Rise to Prominence (Gen. 39-41)

The story-line of Joseph continues after the interlude concerning Judah. The reader’s question is whether or not the Lord will be faithful to the dream-prophecies. Each scene/crisis will reveal further a character trait of nobility.

1. Potiphar's house (39:1-20)

a. Prosperity in Potiphar's house (1-6)

GENESIS 39:2-4

"The LORD was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master.³ When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did,⁴ Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned."

- (1) "The LORD was with Joseph" occurs four times in the chapter (2, 3, 21, 23). It explains how a Hebrew can find success in an Egyptian official's home. God had also promised in similar fashion to be with Isaac and Jacob (26:3, 24, 28; 28:15, 20).
- (2) Joseph was not assigned to the fields. He was to be a servant "in the house" of his master. This would allow Potiphar to observe and reward Joseph's fidelity and abilities. Joseph became Potiphar's "attendant," then was put "in charge of his (Potiphar's) household."
- (3) As a result of Joseph's presence the Lord also blessed the household of the Egyptian official (39:5). Waltke (*Genesis*, 520) notes, "The Lord's power overflows through the Semitic Joseph to the Hamitic Egyptians just as the Lord had promised Abraham (see 12:3)."

b. Temptation in Potiphar's house (7-10)

GENESIS 39:6b-7

"Now Joseph was well-built and handsome,⁷ and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, 'Come to bed with me!'"

- (1) Only two men in the Hebrew Bible are described in outward, appealing form, Joseph and David. The description here of Joseph sets the stage for the approach of Potiphar's wife (unnamed in the Scriptures).
- (2) "After a while" indicates that the sexual tension within the woman has been building. She is enslaved to her lust for a Hebrew slave, thus "Come to bed with me."
- (3) Joseph refuses on three grounds (39:8-9):
 - To do so would be a breach of trust with his master (8)
 - To do so would be a moral violation against his master (9)
 - To do so would be a sin against God (9)

GENESIS 39:10

“And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.”

c. Disgrace in Potiphar’s house (11-20)

GENESIS 39:11-12

“One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside.¹² She caught him by his cloak and said, ‘Come to bed with me!’ But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.”

(1) Potiphar’s wife seizes a moment when the house is empty save Joseph about “his duties.” Again, she insists that he sleep with her. As a slave (even trusted slave), Joseph was bound to obey his mistress. As a trustworthy attendant, he was morally bound to refuse. As a son of the covenant with God, he was spiritually bound to not sin. Compare this story to the previous one where Judah pursues immorality.

2 TIMOTHY 2:22

“Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

(2) Joseph flees as Potiphar’s wife grabs his “cloak” (garment). The word for grab (“caught”) is a forceful one usually descriptive of masculine violence (cf. Deut. 22:28).

(3) Potiphar’s wife has acted rashly and must cover her tracks:

- By calling the “household servants” together to hear her fabricated story against the “Hebrew slave” (39:13-15).
- By telling her husband of the “Hebrew” slave’s unwanted advances (“make sport of me” could mean to deride or put down, but in the context of the story, it has a sexual connotation) (39:16-18).

GENESIS 39:19-20a

“When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, ‘This is how your slave treated me,’ he burned with anger.²⁰ Joseph’s master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined.”

(1) Potiphar’s wife pushes her husband’s “buttons” by referring to Joseph not by name but in a derisive way, “Your” slave.

(2) Potiphar “burned with anger.” The text does not specify against whom. Does he believe the story of his wife? Does he think Joseph capable of such an act?

(3) Potiphar put Joseph in prison. The crime of attempted rape was a capital offense. Potiphar only has Joseph placed where “the king’s prisoners were confined.” Does this suggest that Potiphar may not altogether believe his wife’s version of the supposed incident?

2. Pharaoh’s prison (39:20b – 40:23)

a. Same story, different verse: parallels

Joseph and Potiphar	Joseph in Prison
Joseph blessed in Potiphar’s house (39:2-6)	Joseph blessed in Pharaoh’s prison (39:20a-23)
Joseph mistreated: unwanted attention (39:7-19)	Joseph mistreated: unwanted neglect (40:14-15, 23)
Joseph placed in prison (39:1, 20)	Joseph remains (left) in prison (40:23)

b. Blessing in prison (39:20b-23)

GENESIS 39:20b-23

“But while Joseph was there in the prison,²¹ the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.²² So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there.²³ The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph’s care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.”

(1) Note again the recurring phrase, “the Lord was with him” (39:21, 23). Regardless of Joseph’s situation, he continues to be blessed of God. The Lord has shown “kindness” (Hb. hesed = loyalty love) to Joseph.

(2) Like Potiphar the warden placed Joseph in an important administrative role. This will provide the setting to the “Cupbearer/Baker Saga.”

c. The cupbearer and the baker (40:1-23)

GENESIS 40:1-4a

“Some time later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt.² Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker,³ and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined.⁴ The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them.”

- (1) “Some time later” suggests that Joseph has been in prison for quite a while. The total length of time is 13 years; Joseph was 17 years of age when sold into slavery (37:2) and 30 years when he began serving in Pharaoh’s house (41:46). To this point he has been in prison for about ten years or so.
- (2) “Offended” (lit. sinned) speaks of palace intrigue, perhaps an aborted attempt on Pharaoh’s life. Since cupbearers and bakers both attended to the “king of Egypt’s” food, perhaps the intrigue implicated both men. Yet, due to uncertainty of actual events, the actual guilt of one or the other is in doubt. In time one will be acquitted; one will be hanged.

GENESIS 40:6-8

“When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected.⁷ So he asked Pharaoh’s officials who were in custody with him in his master’s house, ‘Why do you look so sad today?’⁸ ‘We both had dreams,’ they answered, ‘but there is no one to interpret them.’ Then Joseph said to them, ‘Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams.’”

- (1) The chief cupbearer and the baker both have had troubling dreams.
- (2) Joseph acknowledges that the interpretations of dreams “belong to God” (cf. Dan. 2:28). Apparently this gift has been given to Joseph as a part of his being blessed by God.
- (3) The cupbearer’s dream was interpreted by Joseph to mean that in three days the cupbearer would be restored to his former place (40:9-13). Joseph asks the man to remember him and use his influence on his behalf (40:14-15).
- (4) The baker’s dream was interpreted by Joseph to mean that in three days he would not be restored to his former position, but rather hanged (presumably for the crimes against Pharaoh).

GENESIS 40:23

“The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.”

- (1) Two years will lapse until the cupbearer remembers Joseph. (cf. 41:1)
- (2) Perhaps this ingratitude foreshadows a future time when “a new king who did not know Joseph came to power in Egypt” (Ex. 1:8). Joseph’s future benefits to the Egyptian people will, like the cupbearer’s present forgetfulness, eventually fade.

3. Pharaoh's favor (41:1-57)

a. Pharaoh's dreams (1-40)

After two more years in prison for Joseph, Pharaoh had two troubling dreams (41:1-7).

GENESIS 41:8

"In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him."

- (1) Pharaoh's first action is to call for the "magicians and wise men" of Egypt or skilled magicians, ones practiced in magic and soothsaying (cf. Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:7). For all of their learned art, none could interpret the dreams.
- (2) The cupbearer remembered his "shortcomings" (lit. sins) and related to Pharaoh his experience with Joseph some two years earlier.

GENESIS 41:14-16

"So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh.¹⁵ Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.'¹⁶ 'I cannot do it,' Joseph replied to Pharaoh, 'but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.'"

- (1) Egyptians were clean-shaven. Joseph must be made presentable to meet with Pharaoh.
- (2) Joseph disavows any human ability to interpret dreams. But God can (and will) reveal the meaning that Pharaoh "desires," not to say that the dream will be pleasant to the king but it will be factual, true, right (NLT: "will set you at ease").
- (3) Both dreams are characterized by contrasts:
 - (a) Dream #1: fat and sleek cows vs. scrawny, very ugly and lean (41:17-21)
 - (b) Dream #2: seven heads of full and good grain vs. seven heads withered and lean (41:22-24)
- (4) Joseph interprets both dreams as having one meaning: seven years of abundance will be followed by seven years of famine (41:25-32). The assurance of this correct interpretation is enhanced by Joseph's words:
 - "God has revealed" (25)
 - "God has shown" (28)
 - "firmly decided by God" (32)
 - "God will do it soon" (32)

GENESIS 41:33

“And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt.”

- (1) Joseph further counseled Pharaoh to prepare for the coming famine by appointing a kind of prime minister (vizier) and others (commissioners) to help him. Taking a fifth of each abundant year’s harvest and storing it would protect against the coming years of famine.
- (2) Pharaoh agrees and believes that Joseph is just the man.

GENESIS 41:39-40

“Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you.⁴⁰ You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.’”

- b. Joseph’s position (41-57)

GENESIS 41:41-43

“So Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.’⁴² Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph’s finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.⁴³ He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and people shouted before him, ‘Make way!’ Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt...”

- (1) Joseph is installed in his new position as “second-in-command.” He is given Pharaoh’s signet ring whereby documents can be officially validated.
- (2) To complete his new standing Pharaoh also gives Joseph a new name (new identity), Zaphenath-Paneah (perhaps, “God speaks and lives”) and a priest’s daughter to be his wife.
- (3) Joseph is 30 years old when he begins his new duties (41:46). Before the years of famine come, two sons are born to Joseph and Asenath: Manasseh and Ephraim (41:51-92).
- (4) When the years of famine arrive,
“...all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the world...” (41:57).

The stage is now set for a fateful reunion (so, Genesis 42).

C. Family Reunion (Genesis 42-45)

To this point the narrative seems to be about Joseph. While certainly a key player in the drama, beneath the story-line is the hidden, sovereign hand of God. He equips Joseph with the ability to interpret dreams (41:16), gifts him with supernatural wisdom (41:33) and discernment (41:38), and enables him to face all circumstances with integrity and forthrightness. Upon interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph has strongly acknowledged that the matter (even life and the course of human history) has been "firmly decided by God...." (41:32). God's sovereign hand will continue to guide as the story begins to rise to its crescendo.

1. First Journey – without Benjamin (42:1-38)

GENESIS 42:1-4

"When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, 'Why do you just keep looking at each other?' ² He continued, 'I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die.' ³ Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. ⁴ But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him."

- a. The famine extends beyond the borders of Egypt. Jacob, the patriarch of the entire clan, admonishes his sons to travel to Egypt to buy grain.
- b. Ten brothers make the trek (Benjamin, the second son of Rachel and Jacob's favored son will not accompany the band).

Genesis 42:7-24 is characterized by a chiastic structure that captures the drama of the first encounter of disguised Joseph and his ten brothers (who do not recognize him) (Ross, 649).

Note the chiasm which follows:

- A Joseph knew his brothers and remembered (7-9^a)
- B Joseph accused them of being spies, but they explained their situation (9^b-13)
- C Joseph set out a test whereby they could prove they were honest men (14-16)
- D Joseph put them into prison (17)

HINGE

- C' Joseph set out a new test for the brothers to prove they were honest (18-20)
- B' The brothers confessed their guilt concerning their brother, and Reuben accused them of their fault (21-22)
- A' Joseph understood and wept (23-24)

Note:

- a. Joseph looks, speaks, acts like an Egyptian official. His brothers do not recognize him (20 years have passed).
- b. Seeing his brothers bow before his authority, Joseph recalls the dream of many years earlier, namely that his brothers would bow down before him (37:5-11).
- c. Joseph fabricates “tests” to ascertain whether or not his brothers have changed over the years. He demands that the youngest brother be brought to him (42:18-20).
- d. Not realizing that Joseph could understand their language, the brothers lament that this trouble was rooted in their harsh, brutal treatment of their “supposedly” dead brother. Reuben upbraids the brothers as well. This remorse will lead to repentance. Joseph is clearly directing the story to test his brothers.

GENESIS 42:25-28

"Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put each man's silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. After this was done for them,²⁶ they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left.²⁷ At the place where they stopped for the night one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey, and he saw his silver in the mouth of his sack.²⁸ 'My silver has been returned,' he said to his brothers. 'Here it is in my sack.' Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, 'What is this that God has done to us?'"

- a. Finding their silver in the grain sacks creates massive apprehension in the hearts of the nine brothers (recall that

Simeon was left in custody in Egypt until they returned with Benjamin – 42:24).

- b. Apparently Joseph is testing their loyalty and honesty. Will they actually return with the youngest brother? Will they leave a brother to permanently remain in prison while they stay safely at home? The test will expose the character of the brothers.

GENESIS 42:29

“When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them.”

- a. The brothers related in detail and in full honesty the troubling encounter with the Egyptian official (Joseph).
- b. When Jacob heard that Simeon was in effect a hostage, he bemoaned the loss of three sons: Joseph, Simeon, and Benjamin should they take him back to Egypt (42:36).
- c. Reuben offers his own sons in exchange for Simeon and Benjamin should they not return (42:37). The offer may have been well-intentioned but carried little weight.
- d. Jacob is unwilling to let Benjamin go (42:38).

2. Second Journey – with Benjamin (43:1-34)

- a. The brothers return to Egypt (1-14)

GENESIS 43:1-2

“Now the famine was still severe in the land.² So when they had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, ‘Go back and buy us a little more food.’”

- (1) The seven year famine continues (41:29-30, 57).
- (2) Jacob instructs his sons to return to Egypt to buy more food.
- (3) Judah reminds his father that they cannot go unless they have young Benjamin per the specific command of the Egyptian official (43:7).
- (4) Again, Judah speaks and takes on the leadership role. He agrees to bear the blame if the youngest is lost (43:8-10)
- (5) There is no other choice. The brothers must return or all will be lost (not to mention, Simeon, who still remains in prison). Jacob instructs the brothers to take a “gift” (i.e., a token of submission or respect). Plus, they are to return the silver found in their grain sacks as well as take more silver to purchase grain (43:11-12). Jacob despairs; Benjamin leaves with his brothers; another “surprise” awaits them.

b. Joseph receives his brothers (15-34)

GENESIS 43:15-16

“So the men took the gifts and double the amount of silver, and Benjamin also. They hurried down to Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph. ¹⁶ When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, ‘Take these men to my house, slaughter an animal and prepare a meal; they are to eat with me at noon.’”

- (1) The brothers arrive in Egypt with gifts, double the amount of silver, and Benjamin.
- (2) Joseph instructs his household steward to prepare a noon banquet at his home. The brothers are “frightened” and fearful that the “silver incident” might lead to their destruction (43:17-18).
- (3) The brothers confess to the house steward their surprise (innocence) at finding the silver but assure the steward that it has been returned along with more to buy food (43:19-22).

GENESIS 43:23

“‘It’s all right,’ he said. ‘Don’t be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks; I received your silver.’ Then he brought Simeon out to them.”

- (4) Joseph arrives and the brothers bow down (43:26). During the noon meal, he converses with the anxious men:
 - (a) “How is your aged father?”
 - (b) “Is this your youngest brother?”
 - (c) “Serve the food.”
- (5) Joseph must hurriedly leave the banquet as his emotions overwhelm him at the sight of his younger brother (43:30). When Joseph was sold into slavery Benjamin would have been about a year old. Love for family is still strong in Joseph. What is it for his brothers?

GENESIS 43:32-34

“They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to Egyptians. ³³ The men had been seated before him in the order of their ages, from the firstborn to the youngest; and they looked at each other in astonishment. ³⁴ When portions were served to them from Joseph’s table, Benjamin’s portion was five times as much as anyone else’s. So they feasted and drank freely with him.”

- (1) Joseph's exalted position separates him from the others at the feast.
- (2) The brothers are amazed at the seating order directed by their host; they are seated first-born to the youngest. All that Joseph has arranged is a test. Will he find sibling rivalry? Will they treat each other callously? All proceeds under Joseph's watchful eye.
- (3) Benjamin receives a five-fold portion from the table of Joseph, far beyond what was customary for a guest of honor.

PROVERBS 23:1-3 NLT

"While dining with a ruler,
 pay attention to what is put before you.
² If you are a big eater,
 put a knife to your throat;
³ don't desire all the delicacies,
 for he might be trying to trick you.

In other words, when eating with an important official, watch yourself. Curb your appetite ("knife to your throat"); don't be taken in by the "delicacies." You are being observed! ("deception may be involved").

3. Joseph's test (and revelation) (44:1-45:28)

a. The final test (44:1-34)

(1) The steward's test (1-13)

GENESIS 44:1-2

"Now Joseph gave these instructions to the steward of his house: 'Fill the men's sacks with as much food as they can carry, and put each man's silver in the mouth of his sack. ² Then put my cup, the silver one, in the mouth of the youngest one's sack, along with the silver for his grain.' And he did as Joseph said."

- (a) One final test will determine the brothers' integrity.
- (b) All sacks will contain grain and silver, thus all will appear guilty. But the younger brother's sack will also contain Joseph's special cup (perhaps on display the night before). Will the brothers flee if given the chance or will they care for their younger brother's welfare (unlike the care they displayed to Joseph years earlier)?
- (c) The ruse works again. Silver is found in each man's sack. Benjamin's sack also has the cup (goblet) belonging to Joseph.

(d) “At this, they tore their clothes” (44:13).

- Their actions are telling.
- The brothers now demonstrate true remorse. “The narrative conveys again the irony of deserved punishment for the offenders. They were guilty (before) but did not show remorse; now they are innocent and demonstrate deepest agony” (Mathews, 800).

(2) Joseph’s test of Judah’s integrity (14-34)

GENESIS 44:14-16

“Joseph was still in the house when Judah and his brothers came in, and they threw themselves to the ground before him.¹⁵ Joseph said to them, ‘What is this you have done? Don’t you know that a man like me can find things out by divination?’¹⁶ ‘What can we say to my lord?’ Judah replied. ‘What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered your servants’ guilt. We are now my lord’s slaves—we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup.’”

- (a) Note that Judah’s name is listed two times in the passage (a third time in 44:18). Judah is the leader of the brotherly clan; he will speak for all.
- (b) Note also that the brothers “threw themselves to the ground” in reckless abandon and offered themselves as slaves to Joseph.
- (c) “God has uncovered your servants’ guilt” speaks not to stolen silver and cup, of which they rightly feign innocence, but to the deed of years ago with regard to their other brother (not to mention Tamar, Bilhah and Dinah “affairs”).
- (d) Joseph is prepared to allow the brothers to return to their home. Only the one (i.e., Benjamin) guilty of stealing the special cup must stay and be punished (44:17). Now, the trap has been sprung. What will Judah or the brothers choose to do?

GENESIS 44:18

“Then Judah went up to him and said: ‘Pardon your servant, my lord, let me speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself.’”

- (a) Judah now begins his plea (the longest speech in Genesis).
- (b) “His test brought forth one of the truly great

speeches of history. Judah's speech was great because of its sincerity of purpose, its emotional depth, its altruistic concern, its revelation of the conversion of the speaker, and its substitutionary plea" (Vos, *Genesis*, 154).

- (c) Eleven times Judah refers to himself or his brothers as the Egyptian official's "servant" or "servants." Seven times (18-34) Joseph is deferentially referred to as "my lord." Fifteen times "father" is used in the conversation.
- (d) Judah rehearses the two journeys to Egypt to seek food. He recounts his previous conversations with the Egyptian official (Joseph). He emphasizes their father's (Jacob's) great love for his youngest son and that without this son, the father would die (44:18-32).

GENESIS 44:33-34

"Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers.³⁴ How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come on my father."

- (a) Judah offers to substitute his life for the accused thief, Benjamin.
- (b) The evidence of a changed life is complete. The test is over.

b. The final revelation (45:1-28)

The apex of the story of estranged brothers has finally arrived. What prophetic dreams foretold has now come to fruition. But the pathway has been anything but smooth. The tearful reconciliation is made possible by Joseph's careful testing of his brothers and sealed with the heartfelt, moving speech of Judah (44:18-34).

The time for Joseph's self-revelation is now.

GENESIS 45:1-2

"Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers.² And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it."

- (1) The cool, professional veneer of an Egyptian vizier gives way to the passionate emotions of a long-lost brother.
- (2) The room is cleared of Egyptians; this tearful reunion is to be a family matter.

(3) The effect on his brothers is astonishment and fear (45:3). Joseph comforts them with careful words.

GENESIS 45:4-5

“Then Joseph said to his brothers, ‘Come close to me.’ When they had done so, he said, ‘I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! ⁵ And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.’”

(4) Joseph also displays an acknowledgement that God’s guiding hand has always been at work:

- “God sent me ahead of you” (45:5)
- “God sent me ahead of you” (45:7)
- “not you who sent me here, but God (45:8)
- “God has made me lord of all Egypt” (45:9)

GENESIS 45:14-15

“Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. ¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.”

(1) Benjamin is Joseph’s only “full-blood” brother, the youngest and the one Joseph knows least.

(2) Further, Joseph embraces and weeps with all his brothers. The reconciliation from Joseph’s point of view is complete. The brothers may still have lingering fear alongside their emotional embrace. Those brothers who formerly “could not speak a kind word to him” have changed, thus “Afterward his brothers talked with him” (45:15).

GENESIS 45:16-18

“When the news reached Pharaoh’s palace that Joseph’s brothers had come, Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased. ¹⁷ Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Tell your brothers, “Do this: Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan, ¹⁸ and bring your father and your families back to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the fat of the land.”’”

(1) Pharaoh’s gratitude to Joseph’s exemplary service to Egypt extends an invitation to bring the clan of Jacob to Egypt.

(2) The “sons of Israel” return to their home to bring back Jacob (Israel) and the rest of the family (45:21).

- (3) Joseph gives to his brothers money and “new clothing,” a gesture of affection and esteem. Even as resentment over Joseph’s “richly ornamental robe” caused early discord, now the gift of clothing helps bridge the breach.
- (4) Joseph’s parting words are important: “Don’t quarrel (lit. “get excited”) on the way” (45:24).
 - The time for self-recrimination is over.
 - The time of receiving and giving forgiveness is at hand (“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other” – Eph. 4:32).
 - The time to transparently face their father with the true story is near.
- (5) Convincing Jacob that Joseph was alive was not immediate. However, presumably after the brothers detailed the full story, the patriarch can exclaim, “I’m convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die” (45:28).

D. Final Days (Genesis 46-50)

1. Jacob to Egypt (Gen. 46:1 - 47:31)

a. Beginning of the journey (46:1-7)

GENESIS 46:1-4

“So Israel set out with all that was his, and when he reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. ² And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, ‘Jacob! Jacob!’ ‘Here I am,’ he replied. ³ ‘I am God, the God of your father,’ he said. ‘Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. ⁴ I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph’s own hand will close your eyes.’”

- (1) Beersheba is a southern marker of the Promised Land. Jacob pauses long enough to offer sacrifices. It seems as if he feels a need for permission to leave.
- (2) Similar to the Bethel dream (28:10-15), Jacob receives a confirming vision to not fear traveling to Egypt. Further, God promises to make Jacob’s clan “into a great nation there.” Egypt would be the place of Jacob’s death in the presence of his son, Joseph.
- (3) Assured by the revelatory dream, Jacob and family depart to Egypt (46:5-7).

b. Genealogy of the “sons of Israel” (46:8-27)

- (1) This genealogy demonstrates that God’s promise of numerous descendants (cf. Gen. 12:2; 15:5; 17:6, et al.) is being fulfilled.
- (2) The family listings are arranged by the sons of Jacob by Leah (8-15), by Leah’s handmaiden, Zilpah (16-18), by Rachel (19-22) and by Rachel’s maid, Bilhah (23-25). Refer to the chart Session 4, p. 73.

GENESIS 46:26-27

“All those who went to Egypt with Jacob—those who were his direct descendants, not counting his sons’ wives—numbered sixty-six persons.²⁷ With the two sons who had been born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob’s family, which went to Egypt, were seventy in all.”

c. Reunion of Jacob and Joseph (46:28 – 47:12)

GENESIS 46:28-29

“Now Jacob sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to get directions to Goshen. When they arrived in the region of Goshen,²⁹ Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time.”

- (1) Judah is sent ahead by Jacob. He is now the acknowledged leader of the sons. The reunion is reminiscent of an earlier encounter of Jacob and Esau (32:3).
- (2) Anxious Joseph races to meet his father at Goshen. Once again the “vizier” of Egypt is overcome with emotion. Jacob is now content enough to die, though in fact he will live in Egypt for 17 years longer.
- (3) Joseph coaches his brothers on proper protocol to meet Pharaoh (46:31-34). They were to honestly acknowledge that they were shepherds, though the occupation was “detestable” to Egyptian sensibilities. This (and their settlement in Goshen) will naturally keep the peoples apart.
- (4) Pharaoh meets five of Joseph’s brothers and the promises made are confirmed by Pharaoh (47:1-6). Next, Joseph presents his aged father to Pharaoh (47:7-10).

GENESIS 47:11-12

“So Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land, the district of Rameses, as Pharaoh directed.¹² Joseph also provided his father and his brothers and all his father’s household with food, according to the number of their children.”

d. The famine continues (47:13-31)

Five more years of famine has created desperate conditions in Canaan and Egypt. Joseph's management of the crisis increased Pharaoh's wealth and lands, while providing a means to survive for the hard-hit Egyptian populace. At the conclusion of this section (28-31) Jacob makes Joseph promise that upon his death, he will be taken back to the Promised Land to be buried at the cave of Machpelah near Hebron. Joseph agrees.

2. Blessing of Joseph's sons (48:1-22)

GENESIS 48:5-6

"Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here will be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine. ⁶ Any children born to you after them will be yours; in the territory they inherit they will be reckoned under the names of their brothers."

- a. Joseph's sons receive the customary double-portion of blessing and inheritance rights (often the privilege of the first-born, but not always).
- b. Joseph, though a son of Jacob (Israel), will not be reckoned as a separate tribe. His sons will be considered sons (tribes) of Israel, thus the double-portion.

HEBREWS 11:21

"By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff."

- c. Israel (Jacob) formally and irrevocably blesses Manasseh (the older) and Ephraim indicating that the younger would be greater than the older.
- d. Israel (Jacob) also has a blessing for Joseph (48:15-16) and a final prophetic word. "I am about to die, but God will be with you and take you back to the land of your fathers" (48:21).

3. Blessing of Jacob's sons (49:1-33)

These blessings are binding, prophetic and irrevocable. Each of the twelve sons is blessed.

- a. Reuben, Simeon and Levi are bypassed for leadership of the clan of tribes. That privilege will be given to Judah.
- b. Judah's blessing

(1) GENESIS 49:8-12

“Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons will bow down to you. ⁹ You are a lion’s cub, Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? ¹⁰ The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his. ¹¹ He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. ¹² His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk.”

(2) Judah will be the ruling tribe (“scepter”). From Judah will come the future King David, as well as the future Messiah.

c. Joseph’s double blessing would be given to his two sons. When the later “12 tribes of Israel” are mentioned, Joseph’s name is not found, but is evident in his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

Per Jacob’s earlier instructions to Joseph (47:28-31), Jacob announces his last request to be buried with his family (49:29-32).

“When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people.” (49:33).

4. Death of Jacob (50:1-26)

a. Jacob’s burial (50:1-14)

(1) Joseph made preparations for his father to be embalmed, an act which would demonstrate dignity to Pharaoh and his court and one which would preserve the body for the journey home (1-3).

(2) Joseph received permission to take his father to his ancestral burial site. A delegation of Egyptian “dignitaries” and court officials accompanied Joseph and his brothers (4-11). The respect given to Joseph’s father bespeaks the honor and appreciation due to Joseph and his key role in the years of famine (the Egyptians: “You have saved our lives” – 47:25).

GENESIS 50:12-14

“So Jacob’s sons did as he had commanded them: ¹³ They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre, which Abraham had bought along with the field as a burial place

from Ephron the Hittite.¹⁴ After burying his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, together with his brothers and all the others who had gone with him to bury his father.”

b. Joseph’s reassurance (50:15-21)

Upon the death of the patriarch, Jacob, the uncertain brothers fear that Joseph will now possibly seek his revenge. They relate words attributed to their father, but in fact, probably were fabricated out of fear.

GENESIS 50:16-17

“So they sent word to Joseph, saying, ‘Your father left these instructions before he died:¹⁷ “This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.” Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.’ When their message came to him, Joseph wept.”

Joseph’s brothers come to him, throw themselves down (again the prophetic dream is fulfilled), and pronounce, “we are your slaves” (50:18).

The reply of Joseph excludes character and spiritual insight.

GENESIS 50:19-21

“But Joseph said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God?²⁰ You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.²¹ So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.’ And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.”

- Don’t fear.
- God’s sovereign hand was at work.
- Our familial relationship has been restored.

c. Joseph’s death (50:22-26)

(1) Joseph lived for 110 years (22).

(2) Joseph required on oath that his “brothers” (probably relatives is best) take his bones back to the land of his fathers (24-25).

EXODUS 13:19

“Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the Israelites swear an oath. He had said, ‘God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place.’”

(3) Joseph was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt (26).

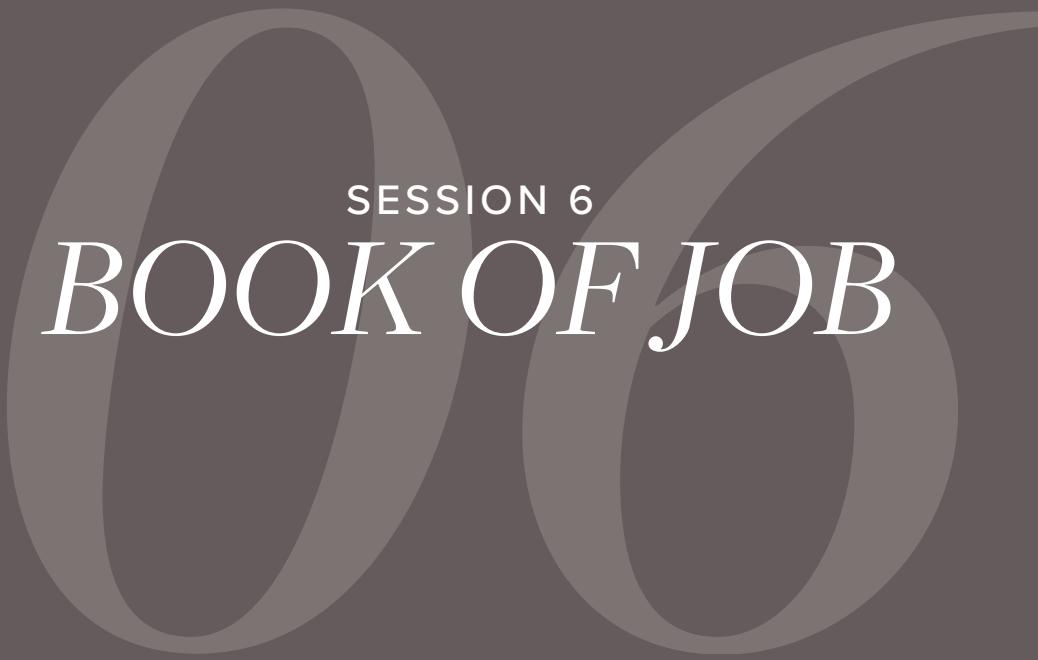
◆ **INSIGHT**

“The statement about the brothers’ evil plans and God’s good plans now opens up the inmost mystery of the Joseph story... Even where no man could imagine it, God had all the strings in his hands.”

(G. Von Rad quoted by Waltke, 623)

◆ **INSIGHT**

Joseph lived 110 years. Joshua, the successor to Moses also lived 110 years. Joseph and Joshua are the bookends of the long sojourn in Egypt. Matthews (931) observes, “The mention of ‘Egypt’ as the final word of Genesis prepares the way for the events that follow in the Book of Exodus. Although the promise to the patriarchs was not yet fulfilled, and indeed appeared very far from ever being accomplished, the Book of Genesis is calling on the reader to take up the faith of Joseph in the promises made to the Fathers.”

The background of the image features a dark brown or black gradient. Overlaid on this are three large, semi-transparent circles of a lighter brown shade. The circles overlap each other, with one circle on the left, one on the right, and one centered below them, creating a sense of depth and organic form.

SESSION 6

BOOK OF JOB

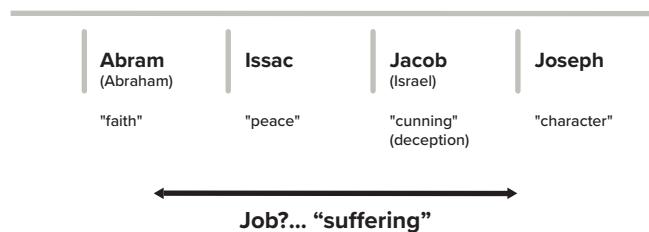
SESSION 6

BOOK OF JOB

I. PRAYER

II. PANORAMA TIMELINE

A. Movement #2: Patriarchs



B. Literature Type

In the English Bible, the first seventeen (17) books are historical; the last seventeen (17) are prophetic. The middle five (5) are poetical in structure, often called “wisdom” literature.

While the overall imperative of the Scriptures can be summarized as “trust” and “obey”, the wisdom books demand that man “stop”, “consider”, “reflect.”

The Book of Job is the first of the poetical, wisdom books.

III. DATE AND AUTHORSHIP

A. Authorship

The author of Job is not specifically given. It could have been the historical man, Job, or an inspired writer who composed his story from oral or written sources available. Elihu has been suggested. Some Jewish traditions point to Moses, others see Solomon as likely due to the wisdom-type composition of Job. Even later Jewish writers have been suggested (such as Hezekiah, Isaiah, Ezra).

B. Date

1. Of composition

Dependent upon the identity of the author, the composition date could be as early as 2000 BC or as late as the second century BC. Due to the wisdom motif (theme and style), perhaps the writing approximates the time of other wisdom literature (perhaps around 1000 BC).

2. Of Job's story

While questions of who wrote the book and when are indecisive, the historical setting of the Book of Job is the patriarchal period. The chart which follows gives 12 reasons for dating Job's story during that time.

C. Theme

A common view is that Job provides a living proof of the justice of God in light of human pain and suffering. Parsons (DTS dissertation, 1980) sees the theme as "to show that the proper relationship between God and man is based solely upon the sovereign grace of God and man's response of faith and submissive trust."

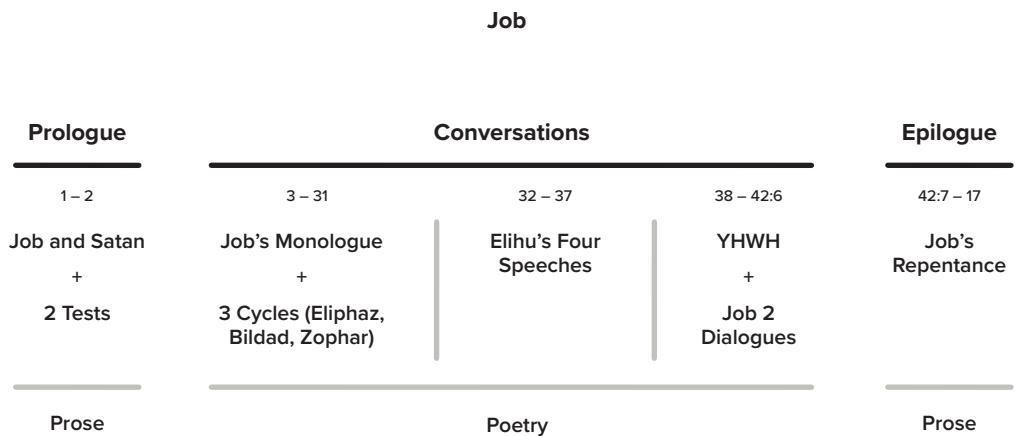
Twelve reasons to date Job's story during the time of the patriarchs:¹

1. Length of Job's life (200 yrs; 42:16) corresponds to the long life of Abraham (175), Isaac (180), Jacob (147) and Joseph (110).
2. Job's wealth was measured in livestock (1:3; 42:12) which was also true of Abraham (Gen. 12:16; 13:2).
3. Sabeans and Chaldeans are referred to as nomads (1:15, 17), but such was not true in later history.
4. Job was the priest of his family (1:5), therefore there was not yet a national priesthood.
5. Hebrew for "piece of silver" or "money" is elsewhere only used in reference to Jacob (Heb. "kesitah").
6. Musical instruments in Job are also referenced in Genesis.
7. Job's daughters were heirs of his estate along with their brothers (42:15); this was not later possible under Mosaic Law (Num. 27:8).
8. Similar literary works to Job are from Mesopotamia about the same time.
9. No Mosaic legislation mentioned.
10. "Shaddai" as a name for God is used 31 times in Job; it also occurs in Genesis.
11. Some personal and place names are also associated with the patriarchal period.
12. Stylistic parallels to certain Ugaritic literature points to a patriarchal setting.

¹ Taken from Zuck, *Job*, 9-11

IV. STRUCTURE OF JOB

A. Overview: Charted



B. Uniqueness

1. The Book of Job introduces Satan as a player in the Job drama.
2. The Book of Job combines prose with poetry, somewhat rare in Biblical literature. Prose-poetry-prose pattern is only found in this Biblical book.
3. The Book of Job is considered a masterpiece of literature (Victor Hugo, “perhaps the greatest masterpiece of the human mind”), (Thomas Carlyle, “a noble Book; all men’s Book!”).
4. The Book of Job possesses a rich vocabulary in the original language (110 hapex legomenas, i.e., a one-time occurrence of a word in the Hebrew Bible); also, there are language influences evident from ancient Akkadian, Arabic, Aramaic, Sumerian, Ugaritic.
5. The Book of Job is replete with vivid metaphors and similes (poetic comparisons).
6. The Book of Job wrestles with the age-old question of evil and suffering in the world; specifically, why do bad things happen to good people (or, is all suffering and calamity due to personal sin?).
7. The Book of Job has God as an active participant in the drama.

Three reasons for the book of Job:²

1. Historical Purpose
“Job reminds God’s people of His providential purposes in allowing their pain.”
2. Doctrinal Purpose
“The presence of pain is allowed by the providence of God for the purifying and perfecting of His people.”
3. Christological Purpose
Job cries for a Mediator (9:33; 33:23), acknowledges a Redeemer (19:25), foreshadows the innocent suffering of the just (for the unjust... namely, Jesus).

V. EXPOSITION/OVERVIEW

A. Prologue (chapters 1-2)

1. The man

JOB 1:1-3

“In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. ² He had seven sons and three daughters, ³ and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.”

a. Character

- (1) “blameless” (without moral blemish)
- (2) “upright” (straight; no deviation from God’s standards)
- (3) “feared God” (awe, reverential respect)
- (4) “shunned evil” (rejected that which is in moral opposition to God’s nature)

b. Wealth

Seven sons (an evidence of God’s blessing – Ruth 4:15; 1 Sam. 2:5) and three daughters head the list of his blessings. He is also considerably wealthy in his abundance of possessions as well as servants.

c. Status

“He was the greatest man among all the people of the east” (1:3).

² Adapted from Geisler, *Popular Survey of the Old Testament*, 187.

2. The challenge

a. Satan's first test (1:6-22): material blessings

JOB 1:6-11

"One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them.⁷ The LORD said to Satan, 'Where have you come from?' Satan answered the LORD, 'From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it.'⁸ Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.'⁹ 'Does Job fear God for nothing?' Satan replied.¹⁰ 'Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.¹¹ But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.'

- (1) Satan (lit. "the adversary") presents himself before God as do the angels (lit. "sons of God") who appear in order to report to God on their activities. His presence in heaven does not appear unusual (Rev. 12:10), but his activities of roaming on the earth hearkens to 1 Peter 5:8:

"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."

- (2) God acknowledges Job to be a godly man (1:8), yet Satan challenges Job's motives for his displayed character.
"Does Job fear God for nothing?" (1:9)

- (3) Satan suggests that Job only serves God for what he gets from it, namely material blessings (1:10-11). Take it away, suggests Satan, and Job will curse God face to face.

b. God's permissive will

JOB 1:12

"The LORD said to Satan, 'Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.'

- (1) Satan is permitted to afflict Job, but with limits.
- (2) Satan's challenge concerning Job's motives also impugns God's integrity; that is, people only worship God because of utilitarian payback—thus, as Satan implies, it's the only way God can get people to serve (worship) Him.
- (3) As a result of the Satanic test, Job loses his wealth (and servants) and his children (1:13-19).

INSIGHT

"Will anyone serve the Lord if he enjoys no personal gain from it? Is worship a coin that buys a heavenly reward? Is piety part of a contract by which to gain wealth and ward off trouble?"

(Zuck, BKC:OT, 720)

c. Job's response

JOB 1:20-22

"At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship ²¹ and said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart.

The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.'

²² In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing."

d. Satan's second test (2:1-10): physical health

JOB 2:3-6

"Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.' ⁴ 'Skin for skin!' Satan replied. 'A man will give all he has for his own life.' ⁵ But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.' ⁶ The LORD said to Satan, 'Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life.'

- (1) Satan again challenges the integrity of Job and God. "Skin for skin" speaks of the accusation of Satan that Job would give up the "skin" or lives of his livestock, servants, even children in order to save his own "skin" (2:4). Again, implied in the rebuke is a challenge that Job only serves for personal motives, the ultimate being his own life.
- (2) The physical ailment afflicted Job severely. Perhaps it was modern-day smallpox, elephantiasis, or any of another set of skin diseases. For certain the wealthy and healthy Job who commanded respect at the city gates (29:7ff) now resides among the ashes of the garbage dump (2:8).
- (3) Further, even Job's wife challenges him. "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!" (2:9)

e. Job's response

JOB 2:10

"He replied, 'You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?'"

- (1) God has permissively allowed a second, most severe test (2:6).

◆ **INSIGHT**

The Serpent-Satan tempted the first woman to rebel against God's clear command. Here, another woman, the wife of Job, succumbs to the Enemy's devices and tells (tempts) Job to curse God.

(2) Job has passed the test. His integrity is evident ("did not sin"). God's integrity is vindicated. Man as evidenced in the remarkable person of Job can worship God though all temporal and material benefits are taken away. The story should end here...but it does not.

3. The consolers

JOB 2:11-13

"When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him.¹² When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads.¹³ Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was."

(1) The text refers to Job's three friends: Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (2:11). Later, a fourth will join Job and his friends (32:1-2).

(2) The three express their dismay in three ways:

- (a) "began to weep aloud" (emotional shock)
- (b) "tore their robes" (broken heartedness – see 1:20)
- (c) "sprinkled dust" (deep grief)

(3) The three do not speak for seven days.

- (a) One week was the customary length of mourning for one dead (Gen. 50:10; 1 Sam. 31:13). Perhaps Job and his hopeless condition seemed as if dead to his friends.
- (b) The friends may have simply held their words as a sign of sympathy, concern and respect.
- (c) By custom the friends would wait until the suffering one spoke before speaking their own personal thoughts.

INSIGHT

This two-chapter prologue has introduced the background to the drama and resultant theological debate. The reader (unlike Job's friends) understands that this was a Satanic temptation for Job to sin but God has permissively allowed it to be a test of Job's character. Job's friends will be in error. Job's pitiful condition is not a result of his sin.

B. Conversation

1. Charted



2. Job's Monologue (Job 3)

Apparently some time has passed since Job's rebuke of his wife's foolish talk and his friends' arrival. Chapter 3 begins with a monologue and the description, "After this, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth" (3:1). Note, however, that while Job will express bitterness, anger and despair in the chapters (dialogues) to come, he never "curses" God as Satan predicted he would (1:11; 2:5).

Note the three statements of Job's supreme frustration.

- a. Wish to never have been born

JOB 3:3-4

"May the day of my birth perish,
and the night that said, 'A boy is conceived!'
⁴ That day—may it turn to darkness;
may God above not care about it;
may no light shine on it."

- b. Wish to have died at birth

JOB 3:11

"Why did I not perish at birth,
and die as I came from the womb?"

- c. Wish to be dead now

JOB 3:20, 23

"Why is light given to those in misery,
and life to the bitter of soul,
Why is life given to a man
whose way is hidden,
whom God has hedged in?"

◆ **INSIGHT**

Job does not curse God. Rather, he bemoans the intensity of his physical state and suffering. He does not challenge the injustice of it, just the severity ("I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil" – Job 4:14)

SYLLOGIST REASONING

The Philosophical Argument of
Job's Friends

1. Major premise: All suffering is punishment for sin.
2. Minor premise: Job has suffered.
3. Conclusion: Therefore, Job has sinned. Yet, this reasoning is flawed (1:1; 8; 2:3).

3. Cycle #1 (Job and Friends) (Job 4-14)

a. Dialogue #1: Eliphaz speaks (Job 4-5)

- (1) Rebuke: "But now trouble comes to you and you are discouraged ... should not your piety be your confidence...." (4:5, 6)
- (2) Proposition: "Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished?" (4:8)... those who sow trouble reap it (4:8)
- (3) Dream/Vision (4:12ff):

"Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can even a strong man be more pure than his Maker? ¹⁸ If God places no trust in his servants, if he charges his angels with error, ¹⁹ how much more those who live in houses of clay, whose foundations are in the dust, who are crushed more readily than a moth!" (4:17-19)

(4) Observation:

"For hardship does not spring from the soil, nor does trouble sprout from the ground.

⁷ Yet man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward." (5:6-7) [i.e., you brought this on yourself]

(5) Advice:

"Blessed is the one whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty." (5:17)

(6) Conclusion:

"We have examined this, and it is true. So hear it and apply it to yourself." (5:27)

b. Dialogue #1: Job replies (Job 6-7)

- (1) I have reason to complain (6:1-7)

- (2) I have reason to despair of life (6:8-13)

- (3) I have reason to despair in my friends (6:14-23)

"Anyone who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty.

¹⁵ But my brothers are as undependable as intermittent streams..." (14-15a)

- (4) I have reason to rebut your argument (6:24-30)

"Teach me, and I will be quiet;

show me where I have been wrong.

²⁵ How painful are honest words!

But what do your arguments prove?" (24-25)

- (5) I have seemingly unending suffering (7:1-6)

"My body is clothed with worms and scabs, my skin is broken and festering." (5)

(6) I have nothing but frustrated prayer (7:7-21)
“If I have sinned, what have I done to you,
you who see everything we do?
Why have you made me your target?
Have I become a burden to you?” (20)

c. Dialogue #2: Bildad speaks (Job 8)

If Eliphaz rebuked Job for spurning God's disciplining hand upon Job's supposed sin (5:17), then here Bildad will accuse Job of spurning God's justice (against supposed sin).

(1) Bildad's premise: God is just; Job is sinful (8:1-7)
“How long will you say such things? Your words are a blustering wind.³ Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right?⁴ When your children sinned against him, he gave them over to the penalty of their sin.⁵ But if you will seek God earnestly and plead with the Almighty,⁶ if you are pure and upright, even now he will rouse himself on your behalf and restore you to your prosperous state.” (2-6)

(2) Bildad's verification: Our fathers believed this (8:8-10)

(3) Bildad's illustration: Nature shows it (8:11-19)

(4) Bildad's summary: Job must be sinful (8:20-22)
“Surely God does not reject one who is blameless or strengthen the hands of evildoers.” (20)

d. Dialogue #2: Job replies (Job 9-10)

(1) Yes, God is great (9:1-13)

(2) But, God is arbitrary (9:14-24)
“How then can I dispute with him? How can I find words to argue with him? (14)
...Although I am blameless, I have no concern for myself; I despise my own life.
²² It is all the same; that is why I say, ‘He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.’” (21-22)

(3) So, God is unfair (9:25-10:22)
“I say to God: Do not declare me guilty, but tell me what charges you have against me.³ Does it please you to oppress me, to spurn the work of your hands, while you smile on the plans of the wicked?” (10:2-3)

e. Dialogue #3: Zophar speaks (Job 11)

(1) Zophar's stern rebuke of Job (11:1-6)
“You say to God, ‘My beliefs are flawless and I am pure in your sight.’⁵ Oh, how I wish that God would speak, that he would open his lips against you...” (4-5)

(2) Zophar's high praise of God (11:7-12)
"Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty?
⁸ They are higher than the heavens above—what can you do? They are deeper than the depths below—what can you know?" (7-8)

(3) Zophar's appeal to Job (11:13-20)
"Yet if you devote your heart to him and stretch out your hands to him,
¹⁴ if you put away the sin that is in your hand and allow no evil to dwell in your tent,
¹⁵ then, free of fault, you will lift up your face; you will stand firm and without fear." (13-15)

f. Dialogue #3: Job replies (Job 12-14)

(1) Job repudiates his friends (12:1 - 13:19)
"I have become a laughingstock to my friends, though I called on God and he answered—
a mere laughingstock, though righteous and blameless!" (12:4)

"Your maxims are proverbs of ashes;
your defenses are defenses of clay." (13:12)
"Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him;
I will surely defend my ways to his face." (13:15)

(2) Job pleads his case with God (13:20-28)
"How many wrongs and sins have I committed? Show me my offense and my sin." (23)

(3) Job loses hope (14:1-22)
"If only you would hide me in the grave and conceal me till your anger has passed!
If only you would set me a time and then remember me!" (13)
"But as a mountain erodes and crumbles and as a rock is moved from its place,
¹⁹ as water wears away stones and torrents wash away the soil, so you destroy a person's hope." (18-19)

4. Cycle #2 and #3 (15-31)

There are three cycles of dialogue of Job with his friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar). Each cycle has 3 dialogues (one for each friend) followed by Job's reply. The third cycle has only two dialogues; Zophar is silent (yet Job has extended monologues in chapters 27-28 and 29-31).

The present study has summarized the first cycle with three dialogues with Job's friends. From this point on in this overview of Job, the highlights of the remaining two cycles are given. Note first the chart overviewing the literary structure of Job 4-31.

a. Chart of the Initial Cycles of Conversation

3 Cycles: Initial Conversation		
Job 4 – 31		
Cycle #1	Cycle #2	Cycle #3
4 – 14	15 – 21	22 – 31
Discourse 1 (Eliphaz)	Discourse 1 (Eliphaz)	Discourse 1 (Eliphaz)
Discourse 2 (Bildad)	Discourse 2 (Bildad)	Discourse 2 (Bildad)
Discourse 3 (Zophar)	Discourse 3 (Zophar)	Extended Monologues (Job)

b. Highlights of the intensified dialogues

- (1) Cycle #1: Job's friends argue that he must be a sinner (else why the suffering) and he must repent.
- (2) Cycle #2: Job's friends more viciously hammer away at Job's sinfulness. There is no call to repent.
- (3) Cycle #3: Job's friends attack and charge him with specific sins. Through all three cycles, Job maintains his innocence.

5. Cycle #2 Highlights (Job 15-21)

a. Eliphaz

“What are mortals, that they could be pure, or those born of woman, that they could be righteous?

¹⁵ If God places no trust in his holy ones, if even the heavens are not pure in his eyes, ¹⁶ how much less mortals, who are vile and corrupt, who drink up evil like water!” (15:14-16)

b. Job

“Then Job replied: ² “I have heard many things like these; you are miserable comforters, all of you!

³ Will your long-winded speeches never end? What ails you that you keep on arguing?” (16:1-3)

“But come on, all of you, try again! I will not find a wise man among you.” (17:10)

INSIGHT

Inspite of Job's deepening depression, accusations from his friends and the seeming silence of heaven, a ray of faith bursts through.

"I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth.²⁶ And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;²⁷ I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (19:25-27)

c. Bildad
"Fire resides in his tent; burning sulfur is scattered over his dwelling." (18:15)

"People of the west are appalled at his fate; those of the east are seized with horror.

²¹ Surely such is the dwelling of an evil man; such is the place of one who does not know God." (18:20-21)

d. Job

"How long will you torment me and crush me with words?

³ Ten times now you have reproached me; shamelessly you attack me." (19:2-3)

"Though I cry, 'Violence!' I get no response; though I call for help, there is no justice." (19:7)

e. Zophar

"My troubled thoughts prompt me to answer because I am greatly disturbed.³ I hear a rebuke that dishonors me, and my understanding inspires me to reply." (20:2-3)

"A flood will carry off his house, rushing waters on the day of God's wrath.²⁹ Such is the fate God allots the wicked, the heritage appointed for them by God." (20:28-29)

f. Job

"Can anyone teach knowledge to God, since he judges even the highest?²³ One person dies in full vigor, completely secure and at ease,²⁴ well nourished in body, bones rich with marrow.²⁵ Another dies in bitterness of soul, never having enjoyed anything good.²⁶ Side by side they lie in the dust, and worms cover them both." (21:22-26)

6. Cycle #3 (Job 22-31)

The final cycle consists of only two dialogues: with Eliphaz and Bildad. Additionally, following his reply to Bildad, Job launches into extended monologues or discourses. See the phrase, "And Job continued his discourse" (27:1), then "Job continued his discourse" (29:1). The end of all cycles and discourses concludes with these extended monologues, then the Scriptures record, "The words of Job are ended" (31:40). Job has rested his case. He has said all that he will say to these friends.

The third cycle focuses upon Eliphaz and Bildad's charge of specific sins to Job. Job stands his ground against these accusations and, in effect, denies their philosophical-theological reasoning (refer back to page 122 and their "Syllogistic Reasoning").

- (1) I deny my suffering is from my sin.
- (2) I deny that the wicked always suffer for sin.
- (3) I deny that I am a deliberate transgressor.

7. Elihu's four speeches (Job 32-27)

a. His anger

"But Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, became very angry with Job for justifying himself rather than God.³ He was also angry with the three friends, because they had found no way to refute Job, and yet had condemned him." (32:2-3)

b. His qualifications (Job 32)

Elihu's Self-Justification to Speak:

- (1) I delayed due to my age (32:4, 6)
- (2) I expected wisdom but heard none (32:3, 7, 11-12)
- (3) I have the Spirit who gives understanding (32:8)
- (4) I have better arguments (32:12-14)
- (5) I have plenty to add (32:15-17)
- (6) I have a compunction to speak (32:18-19)
- (7) I am completely impartial (32:21)

- c. Speech #1: God is not silent (does not hear) as Job charged (33)
- d. Speech #2: God is just in His dealings with man (34)
- e. Speech #3: God is sovereign in all His works and ways (35)
- f. Speech #4: God is magnificent in His dealings with man and in His created world (36-37)

8. Summary: Basic views of Job's four friends:

Three Friends	Elihu
Sin leads to suffering.	Suffering leads to sin.
Suffering is retributive.	Suffering is protective.
Suffering is punitive.	Suffering is educational.
Job should repent.	Job should learn.
Job should initiate restoration.	God had initiated restoration.

(Constable, *Job*, 61)

9. Final conversation: YHWH and Job (Job 38:1-42:6)
 - a. YHWH's first speech (38:1-40:2)

"Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm. He said:
² 'Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge? ³ Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.'" (38:1-3)

 - (1) God finally responds to Job's persistent cry (note 13:22; 31:35).
 - (2) God never mentions Job's suffering.
 - (3) God never discourses about a theology of sin.
 - (4) God does not specifically reply to Job's charge of injustice.
 - (5) God does pose a list of 70 unanswerable questions designed to test the limits of Job's understanding (38:4-39:30).

"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand." (38:4)

"What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside?" (38:19)

"Can you raise your voice to the clouds and cover yourself with a flood of water?
³⁵ Do you send the lightning bolts on their way? Do they report to you, 'Here we are'?" (38:34-35)

"Do you give the horse its strength or clothe its neck with a flowing mane?" (39:19)

"Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom and spread its wings toward the south?" (39:26)
 - b. YHWH's speech summarized (40:1-2)

"The LORD said to Job: ² 'Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!'" (1-2)
 - c. Job's reply (40:3-5)

"I am unworthy—how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth." (4)
 - d. YHWH's second speech (40:6-41:34)

"Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. ⁸ 'Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself? ⁹ Do you have an arm like God's, and can your voice thunder like his?'" (40:7-9)

e. Job's reply (42:1-6)

"I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted.³ You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.⁴ 'You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.'⁵ My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you." (2-5)

◆ **INSIGHT**

Now, the climax from Job's mouth:

"Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes" (42:6)

C. Epilogue (42:7-16)

1. The Lord expresses anger toward Job's friends.

a. They spoke in error ("have not spoken of me what is right" – 42:7)

b. They must offer sacrifices for their sins.

c. They must ask Job to intercede in prayer for them (42:8).

2. The Lord prospered Job even more abundantly than before.

◆ **INSIGHT**

Note the irony. They never once prayed for Job during the disputes. Now, they must ask him to intercede for them in prayer.

◆ **JOB'S EPITAPH**

"After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation.¹⁷ And so Job died, an old man and full of years." (42:16-17)

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